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THE

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FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 31, 1889.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[DR. STONE SAW COMING TOWARDS HIM A TALL FIGURE IN A GREY SHAWL.]

THE CURSE OF THE LESTERS.

CHAPTER XIII.

SIR BASIL LESTER was not coming home for Christmas. His last visit to Vale Lester was still so recent that he could not have asked for another leave of absence; besides, to tell the truth, the young Baronet was not at all anxious to return to Norfolk.

A settled gloom hung over the Court. The mystery of his father's fate was still unsolved, and (perhaps this was the strongest reason of all) though he meant honestly to marry Fenella Devenish, and make her a good husband, he shrank from the idea of beginning his courtship.

Basil fancied—as many others have done—that once married the memory of his first love would vanish. It was as though he thought the very act of putting his wedding ring on Fenella's finger would serve as a spell to banish all recollections of Vana.

He could not bear to pursue his second woo-

ing where all reminded him of his first, and yet he believed that once married to Fenella he should settle down and forget all the romance of the previous summer.

It must be confessed that at present the "forgetting" did not proceed very successfully.

Vana had never been in Ireland, and yet every room of the pretty house allotted to Basil Lester seemed haunted by her presence. There was the piano on which she would have played to him, the garden where he had pictured her as busy sowing summer flowers, the little drawing-room she would have made so pleasant and homelike.

The house was furnished ready for the agent's occupation, and Lord Kilmorna, having liberal ideas, the said furniture was both tasteful and pretty. There was one little blue velvet chair in particular which Basil had fancied as Vana's special seat.

Often in the long autumn evenings, when his first went to Roscommon, he had closed his eyes and pictured the fair girlish form opposite him.

He had even moved the little chair into the

study that the same fancy might follow him at his work.

The little chair went back to the drawing-room promptly when he returned from Vale Lester, but still in his heart Basil knew he could never bear to see Fenella sitting on it.

Lord Kilmorna was rich—that is for an Irish landowner. His mother had been a great heiress, and the coal mines on the Lancashire property kept the young Earl so well supplied with money that his losses in the Emerald Isle were quite unable to impoverish him. He had the sense to see Basil Lester was the man to suit him, so when the three years' agreement was signed he fixed the salary at five hundred a year, and told the young agent he thought himself very lucky to have secured him.

Basil was unusually popular in Roscommon. To begin with, his mother was Irish, and his second name being that of her family, his signature always reminded people of it.

Then, not being pressed for money, Lord Kilmorna had always been a generous landlord, which disposed his tenants favourably towards his young representative.

Then Basil had pleasant manners, and ready wit, so that from the first he had made friends, and then the romance and tragic nature of his father's death conquered even the few who had looked coldly on him.

The story of the Vale Lester murder, as it was termed, was known far and wide, but no light fell on the mystery.

A month after poor Sir George's funeral all was still as impenetrable as the day he died. Percy Lester spent money generously in trying to trace his brother's murderer.

The Government offered a second reward to add to his; but even fifteen hundred pounds' bribe did not tempt "Mrs. Sharpe's" friends to betray her.

Undoubtedly she had been the agent in the crime, even if she did not originate the idea of it; but it seemed as though she had escaped thoroughly—had got off scot free.

"I don't like it, Deb!" said Percy Lester, calling on his sister a few days before Christmas. "Edith won't let me hint at such a thing, but I begin to feel people suspect me. When I went to Dorchester the other day I am sure people were not cordial. I know they think I paid those wretched women to make away with poor George, and I shall never hold my head again if she isn't found, and my character cleared."

The old maid looked at him sharply. There were a good many people said Deborah Lester was the cleverest of the family, and they were not far out.

"You talk like an idiot!" she said, severely. "Why, if you killed off George over me, you'd do yourself no good, unless you made away with Susan and me. I can see now Simon's absurdity will have been a regular curse to us; but though we all got a little bitter, I don't believe one of us would have stooped to murder. As to suspecting you, it's absurd! Your wife has more money than she can spend, and you're neither child nor idiot to leave the fortune to it you got it."

"You are, Deb," said Percy, a little helplessly, "that woman must have been bribed by some one. She couldn't have had any object herself in killing poor George."

"If she was bribed by anyone, depend upon it Cyril Jepson had a hand in it. He's married a regular common woman; and, of course, her relations wouldn't stick at much. Percy did not seem relieved.

"I don't like it," he said, slowly. "I feel people are changed to me. It worries Edith, and I declare I am almost ready to change my name and go off to Canada."

"You'd catch your death of cold," said Miss Deborah, composedly; "besides, that would be the very thing to make people suspect you. Why, all you say applies to me, and yet you don't see me ready to worry myself into fiddle-strings."

She poked the fire rather absently. "Not but what I'm getting tired of Vale Lester," continued the old maid. "And when Basil and Fenella are married I rather think I shall turn my back on Norfolk."

"I've often wondered what makes you so fond of that girl," said Percy, slowly. "It's not like you to take up with a stranger; and you know nothing whatever of her parentage."

"I know a great deal."

The brother stared. "You've never said anything. I always fancied you picked her up in the streets."

"Do you remember Claude Delamere?"

"Perfectly."

He might well say so. Long ago Sir Claude had been Miss Deborah's lover.

In those days neither of them had a penny to rub together. Prudent relations had parted them. The baronet married an heiress and went abroad.

To Percy's knowledge nothing had been heard of him since.

"I met him abroad," said Miss Deborah, slowly, "the year before I brought Fenella home. He was a widower then for the second

time. He enjoyed his first wife's money for his life, then it went to her only son.

There was ill-will between Claude and the young man. He could not ask him to care for Fenella, and now with his dying breath he begged me to give her a home."

"But what was she to him?"

"His grandchild. The child of his only daughter. I think the girl made a rash, imprudent marriage, and her half brother (he was his mother's own son in coldness and calculation) washed his hands of her. I was not sorry. I wanted an interest in my life, and from the day she came to me Fenella has been my delight."

Mr. Percy Lester looked unusually grave.

"I have met young Delamere in London, but he has never alluded to his cousin."

"Young Delamere! Do you mean Claude's son?"

"His grandson. A fine young fellow of six or seven and twenty. He's a direct connection of Edith's, and we have some good blood of him. He doesn't regret that he has no near relations. I am quite sure he would be proud to claim kinship with such a beautiful girl as Fenella; and, really, Sir Level is not a relation to despise."

"Horn!" said Miss Deborah. "Claude just worshipped the child; and it was his own request I should keep her away from her uncle. He seemed to fear some terrible danger awaited Fenella at his own hands."

"Who was her father?"

"A penniless scion of good family. Home-learned with such people. He was poor, but a gentleman every inch. Why, Percy, surely you don't think I would have forwarded the marriage between Fenella and Basil if I had not been sure she came of gentle birth?"

He left her after.

He had spent more than two hours with his sister, but had not even seen a glimpse of Fenella.

Going home, he remarked this to his wife.

"It's not often she leaves me alone with Deborah. Usually she seems like a kind of little spy to prevent our ever talking secrets. I used to like her very much as a child; but, Edith, there are times now when I almost hate Fenella!"

Edith Lester shuddered.

"I should not like to be in her power."

"You never will be," he said, quickly.

"My darling, why trouble yourself with that fear? Believe me, neither Fenella nor anyone else can ever discover our secret."

She sighed wearily.

"I sometimes wish, Percy, we had laid everyone at the time. No one could have blamed us then. It was only an accident. Now I seem haunted by the fear of discovery at every turn."

He looked as troubled as she did, and he had more cause. The sorrow of Edith's life was none of her causing. She had nothing to reproach herself with, but her husband knew perfectly all the trials and troubles that had harassed her were his doing. One sin of his youth had borne exceedingly bitter fruit, and even yet he was cherishing a secret from Edith. There was another drop in his cup she ignored, and must always ignore.

Judkins and his wife had joined Miss Deborah's household. The widowed Lady Lester could no longer afford their services, and they had been glad of a chance to "continue in the family," though the three maids and one odd boy formed a very small train of underlings compared to what they had been accustomed to.

They honestly liked Miss Deborah, but never "took" to the Jepsons and the Percy Lesters. Indeed, old Judkins was a little answerable for that "coldness" of which his master's brother had complained so bitterly. The old man always maintained that Percy and his wife had a secret, and that where there was secrecy there must be wrong.

Fenella was the promised wife of young Sir Basil, and as such, had a peculiar claim on the old servant's regard. She was, besides,

very gracious in her manner to them, so that though for years they had had a veiled hostility to her as a rival to their own young ladies, since coming to the Cottage she had been a staunch favourite with both husband and wife.

They sat together in their comfortable parlour—the underlings took their meals in the kitchen—tea was just over, and Mrs. Judkins was thinking it time to go back to her work, when the door opened suddenly, and Fenella Devreux entered, shuddering in every limb as one smitten by a sudden terror, her face white as marble, and her whole bearing showing she had received some terrible shock.

"Salon! Miss Fenella, what's the matter?" demanded the butler, his teeth chattering in genuine fear, as he looked at the changed face of his young lady.

But Fenella did not speak. She had run on to a chair, and those terrible shudders again convulsed her slender frame.

"My dear," said poor Mrs. Judkins, fairly scared to death, "what is it? Surely you can't be shivering like that for nothing?"

Fenella raised her voice.

"Oh! what a selfish, wicked girl I am to sit here saying nothing while every moment is precious. Judkins, I want you to send for Dr. Stone. Miss Deborah is dying."

"Good gracious!" the old man was on his feet in an instant. "But she was quite well this afternoon when I showed in Mr. Lester."

"She will not speak to me," said Fenella, slowly, "and her breathing is short and troubled. There is this drawn look about her face they noticed in Sir George's. Judkins, don't think me mad, but I am certain the hand which killed your old master is not satisfied with one victim. The murderer is at his cruel work again."

Judkins grew as white as possible.

"Dear heart, Miss Fenella, I hope you don't mean me! The old woman and I were at the Court when Sir George was done to death. If Miss Deborah's been poisoned too since we came it'd look very black for us."

Fenella rewarded him with a tearful smile.

"Should I be here asking your help if I doubted you? Only ride off for the doctor as fast as you can, and your wife will help me restore my poor aunt."

Mrs. Judkins was too flurried to be of much use, but she obeyed Fenella implicitly.

Her own description of her mistress' state was that they found her in a kind of heavy stupor, and that when she came round she seemed to be deadly sick and faint, while her senses wandered strangely.

Fenella was unrelenting in her attention, and Miss Deborah was comfortably in bed before the doctor came, that is, comfortably so far as her surroundings went.

The spasms of agony which now and again contracted her features were beyond any care or kindness to remove. The two women watched in silent agony for the return of Judkins.

He was not long really, though it seemed hours instead of minutes to his distracted wife. The poor old man was as quick as possible, considering he had first to harness the mare in Miss Deborah's basket carriage, and then pursue Dr. Stone from his own house to the Court, where he was dining with the widowed Lady Lester and her daughters.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was like a thunderbolt falling on the group when the old butler appeared in the dining-room. He actually walked in as though he were still a member of the household.

At first poor Lady Lester almost forgot that he had left, and fancied he was in waiting as usual, but with a respectful bow to his late mistress he walked on to the other end of the table and addressed Dr. Stone.

"Please, sir, come at once to the Cottage. Miss Deborah's dying, and Miss Devreux

thinks she's been poisoned, like my poor old master."

There was a dead silence for two minutes. Lady Lester, who usually wept at any mention of her dead husband, was calm and dry-eyed now.

The girls looked at each other in blank amazement. Judkins' announcement had brought home to every one round the table a fact they had never realized before.

If Sharpe was indeed Sir George's murderer not one of his family was safe while she remained at liberty. Over and over again the theory had been started that it was impossible she could have left Dereham without attracting some one's notice.

What if she never had left it, and was still lurking in their neighbourhood ready for mischief.

Dr. Stone found his voice first. "I am sure you will excuse me," he said to Lady Lester, pressing her hand kindly in his own. "I hope and trust the danger is very much exaggerated, but I am anxious to see your sister-in-law at once."

"Of course you must go. Oh! Dr. Stone," the poor creature's voice was almost choked, "don't you see what it is? Any one likely to benefit by that hateful will is made away with! My boy will be the next victim!"

"Nonsense!" cried Dr. Stone, speaking far more positively than he felt. "You are nervous and over-excited, Lady Lester. Depend upon it, I shall find that Miss Devreux has taken fright unnecessarily, and there is nothing very seriously wrong with your sister-in-law."

But Judkins resisted this disparagement of his own and his young lady's judgment.

"She'll be dead outright if you don't make haste, sir!" he said, tragically. "If you'd seen Miss Fenella, which looked like a ghost herself, you'd not be making light of her fears. Am I to go back and say you'll come when you've done dinner?"

"Don't be insolent!" said the doctor, sharply. "I am coming now, but it is no proof of attachment to Miss Deborah to take a gloomy view of her illness, and only alarms her relations."

They drove down the avenue at a brisk pace; the cottage stood almost at the lodge gates, so they were soon there. Dr. Stone never waited for a question to the trim housemaid; brushed straight upstairs and entered Miss Deborah's bedroom.

She was better then, but a very brief survey, a very short examination, convinced him that the same poison which had killed her brother had been administered to her; but there was this difference in the two cases: the drug had been given to Sir George, at first, in such minute quantities that the mischief had gone on for weeks, and the symptoms arose so gradually as not to excite alarm; he judged that the present was the first dose of poison poor Miss Deborah had ever taken, and it had certainly been large enough to prove to any one what caused her sudden illness.

"Will she die?" asked Fenella, with feverishly bright eyes, when the doctor had at last left the sick room, and stood thoughtfully on the rug gazing into the dining-room fire. "Oh! Dr. Stone, can't you save her for me? She is all I have in the world!"

"She is in no danger," returned the doctor, quickly, "but I can't answer for the future. Miss Deborah looks a strong woman, but really she has no constitution. She could never stand repeated doses of this drug. It would not take so long to kill her as it did poor Sir George."

Fenella's beautiful eyes watched him keenly.

"Then it is the same poison. I thought the symptoms were what Lady Lester described, but, here she wrung her hands; 'what am I to do? How am I to save her?'"

"That poison was administered some time this afternoon. Who saw Miss Deborah? Nothing will make me believe she attempted her own life."

"Aunt try to poison herself! How can you even suggest such a thing? She was quite well at lunch. I drove into Dereham in the afternoon, and was away longer than I expected. Fearing I was late, I went to take off my things before going to aunt; when I went to her I found her quite insensible, and yet with a strange struggling noise in her throat, as though fighting for her breath. I rushed off to Judkins directly—"

"And told him she had been poisoned. What put such an idea into your head, Miss Devreux?"

"I had rather not tell you."

"But I want to know."

Fenella bent her head, and looked steadily on the ground.

"I never saw the woman they called 'Mrs. Sharpe,' but I have heard her described over and over again. Dr. Stone, I would swear by all I hold most dear that I saw that woman this afternoon."

"Then why on earth didn't you give her into custody? You must be aware the police are seeking her!"

"I could not!"

"Why not?"

She hesitated.

"I was so frightened. Let me tell you all about it, and do not blame me more than you can help. I was almost home when the pony began to shy. I could not make out what was the matter, when suddenly, crouching against the hedge—it was in Water-lane—I saw that woman. I tried to speak and call for help, but my voice seemed paralyzed. I simply could not speak. Suddenly she rose up, and stretching out both her arms, waved them frantically right in front of the pony. He took fright, and rushed off at a terrific pace, never stopping till he got to our own gate. It was all I could do by holding on to the side of the carriage to prevent myself from being flung out. When the boy came to take the phaeton round to the stables I could hardly walk to the house I trembled so. Aunt has been very nervous since Sir George's death, and I did not want her to see me so upset. That is one reason I did not go to her at once."

"Why didn't you tell me so at first?" asked the doctor, who had listened very attentively.

"I was afraid!"

"What of?"

"That you would laugh at me!" said the girl, faintly. "Oh, Dr. Stone, it was so terrible, I couldn't bear that any one should say it was just my fancy, and that I never saw the woman at all."

Dr. Stone paced the room thoughtfully two or three times in perfect silence, then he stopped in front of Fenella, and asked, suddenly,—

"Do you actually believe that this woman—Mrs. Sharpe we will call her—had been up to the Cottage, and insisted on Miss Deborah swallowing a dose of poison?"

"I knew you would laugh at me!"

"I don't feel inclined to laugh at anything," said the doctor, in a very dejected tone of voice. "Indeed, I am perfectly willing to think the fiend who murdered Sir George quite capable of attempting his sister's life, only there is a great difference in her opportunities. Sir George was always taking medicine, it grew natural for his wife's maid to administer it. The bottles were in her power to tamper with, but Miss Devreux—Fenella—I ask you, is it likely that a woman of your aunt's strong will would calmly drink off any poison presented to her by a perfect stranger?"

Fenella shuddered.

"I never thought she brought it to my aunt!"

"Who then?"

"I am afraid to tell you!"

"Come!" said Dr. Stone, in a kinder tone, "you had better confide in me. I can have no object but to protect Miss Deborah, and if I look at things from a calm, middle-aged, doctor's point of view, rather than a romantic young lady's, you must forgive me."

"Mr. Percy Lester was here all the afternoon. Judkins said he had only just gone when I came in. He was tired after his walk, and aunt rang for the port wine—he never takes tea—that he might have a glass before he returned home."

"You can't think that he did it?" cried the doctor. "Girl, it is too horrible!"

"I don't know what to think."

"But what put the idea into your head?"

"I don't know. If you go up to her own sitting-room I expect you will find the two glasses there just as he left them. I expect the servants have been too upset to tidy up."

Dr. Stone looked unusually troubled.

"I can't believe it. Percy is not a great favourite of mine. He is too silent and reserved to make many friends; but to kill his sister in cold blood, I won't believe such a thing of him!"

"It explains a great deal," said Fenella, dreamily. "at least, I think so!"

"It explains nothing. Percy Lester was at Bournemouth during the last weeks of his brother's illness. Every day of his time can be accounted for. I know it has been suggested that 'Mrs. Sharpe' was a man disguised in female attire, but it could not have been Percy Lester."

"It could not," agreed Fenella, "but every one said the doses of poison were begun weeks before Sharpe came to the Court, only that they increased in size and frequency. After Basil's leaving Percy Lester was a constant visitor till he went to Bournemouth, and he left Vale Lester only a few days before Sharpe came."

Dr. Stone shuddered, it was so true. There was not one word of it he could deny. Fenella saw her advantage, and went on.

"There was no good will between the brothers. Sir George disliked Percy more than any member of the family, yet directly he dies Percy comes forward as the benefactor of his widow and children, settles an income upon Lady Lester, and offers a handsome reward for Sharpe's discovery. He persuaded Basil to leave the starch in his bands, and Basil was weak enough to consent. Dr. Stone, the Vale Lester tragedy may puzzle you, but to me it is as clear as day. Sharpe was only a hired tool! The real murderer, the true assassin, is Percy Lester!"

Dr. Stone shuddered. Fenella spoke with a fire and energy he had never seen in her before. He did not like the girl, he never had liked her, but he admitted that her arguments were sound. He himself believed in Percy Lester's innocence, but he saw Miss Devreux could make out a terrible case against him.

"You would have to prove some object, I fancy, before you brought such an accusation against a man of Percy Lester's standing," said the doctor, coldly. "Remember, he has ample wealth, and no need to sin for money."

Fenella's white teeth gleamed.

"Simon Lester's fortune would tempt many men to stick at nothing."

"But you forget after Sir George there would be two more claimants."

"Doubtless he could remove them. He did not wait long certainly before attempting a second victim, judging from to-day!"

But the doctor would not be convinced.

"Percy Lester would never touch the great prize unless he passed the age of seventy-five, at which Sir George died. Now, Miss Devreux, would a man stain his soul with murder for the sake of something he could not enjoy for ten years, that would not be his, in fact, until he was too old to derive any pleasure from it?"

"His wife is young," retorted Fenella; "he might wish to leave it to her."

"His wife is little short of an angel."

Miss Devreux shook her head. The two red lips were wreathed mockingly together, and she said merrily,—

"A very strange sort of angel!"

"What do you mean?"

"Only that if the people knew the truth about her no door in Vale Lester would open

to Mrs. Percy Lester! I have heard you call yourself a judge of character, Dr. Stone. Pray, do you consider her a happy woman?"

"No."

"And what is the cause of her melancholy?"

"Nothing she need to repent," said the doctor, firmly. "I would stake a great deal on the goodness of Edith Lester. Her melancholy I have always attributed to her disappointment at having no children."

"It is very different," and there and then Miss Devreux whispered the truth in his ear.

"I don't believe it."

"Very well," said Fenella, indifferently. "Defend Mr. Percy Lester and Mrs. Sharpe as much as you please, only I love Miss Deborah dearly, and I won't have her sacrificed to your scruples. If you won't protect your patient, doctor, I shall!"

"You surely would not bring a public accusation against Percy Lester? Think of the shame and dishonour you would bring upon the grand old name which I understand you are one day to share."

"I can't say what I shall do about that. I have made up my mind of two things: neither Percy Lester nor his wife shall enter this house again, and as soon as she is quite recovered I shall persuade Miss Deborah to go away."

Dr. Stone had promised Lady Lester to let her know the state of affairs at the cottage; but with Fenella's suspicions ringing in his ears he could not bring himself to go in person to the Court. He wrote a few lines saying Miss Deborah was in no danger. She had certainly taken a small quantity of poison, but not enough to put her life in peril. All inquiry into how she came to swallow the poison must be deferred until her recovery.

He despatched his groom with the note, and went into his own den, but he could neither fix his thoughts to books or letters, and even his pipe had no charms for him.

Fenella's story haunted him, and at last, late as it was, he turned out, resolving to go down Water-lane and see if the narrative she related so glibly was at least possible.

It was not that he expected to find Mrs. Sharpe still sitting in the ditch waiting to be arrested, but that he doubted whether the lane was wide enough to admit of her behaving as Fenella related.

If only he could have caught Miss Devreux in a falsehood or two he would have felt easier. If she deceived him in one particular she might in another, and he did not want to find her trustworthy lest he should have to accept her opinions of Sir Percy Lester.

The tale sounded uncanny. Just the sort of romance a girl would make rife. A figure crouching in the lane. A white face and glittering eyes; a thick grey shawl thrown over the head; the arms outstretched beneath it, and waved rapidly before a frightened pony. This was almost too detailed a description to be wholly false.

He had read in old-fashioned books of females acting ghosts with white sheets over their heads, and spectral hands stretched out threateningly from beneath.

Perhaps Miss Devreux had perused these tales and had taken the idea of the grey shawl from them.

He could have laughed at his own folly. He would have been ashamed to confide his intention to any human creature; but he really did go down Water-lane with no other aim than to discover whether there could possibly be any truth in Fenella's story.

Water-lane was about a quarter of a mile from Miss Deborah's, a very narrow thoroughfare seldom used in winter, but in summer much frequented by the village children for the sake of the wild flowers which grew so plentifully in the hedges.

It was also a short cut both to the cottage and Sir George's lodge, but the late baronet had condemned it as damp, and strictly forbidden his household to walk there.

The night was pitch dark; there was no moon, and not a single star relieved the gloom of the sky.

Dr. Stone, with a dark lantern, felt just a little ashamed of himself as he walked past Miss Deborah's cottage and turned into Water-lane. For old gentlemen to go out in the depths of winter at eleven o'clock at night into lonely country lanes is rather unheard of proceedings, and he knew that if it reached the ears of any of his friends he should never hear the last of it.

He walked the whole length of the lane, and decided Fenella must have invented her story, since it seemed simply impossible that a woman who knew a price was on her head, should linger in such an open thoroughfare.

He was retracing his steps slowly, a little stiff, very cold, and disgusted with his own folly, when suddenly coming towards him he saw a tall figure in a grey shawl, and noticed precisely the same menacing gestures Fenella had described so forcibly as scaring her pony.

The doctor gave a loud scream for help, and then remembered the uselessness of it. There was no house nearer than the cottage, a quarter of a mile off. No one was likely to be passing, and as for a policeman, the force was represented at Vale Lester by one solitary constable, just now engaged at the beerhouse at the extreme end of the village in insisting it was past closing time.

Dr. Stone screamed for help; but he knew before the sound had died away he could expect none, and then just that strange sensation attacked him Fenella had described.

Physically he was a strong man. His nerves were good and his courage ample; he would have liked to take summary vengeance on Mrs. Sharpe; he would have enjoyed rebuking her bitterly for her sins, and then dragging her off single handed to the police-station—but he could not.

Simply could not. For three seconds he was as one rooted to the ground, his legs and feet would not move at his bidding.

Then, too late, he recovered himself, and seized hold of the woman's shoulder; but she was too wary for him.

His grasp had only secured the heavy grey shawl.

With great skill and presence of mind the stranger threw off her warm disguise in such a manner that it fell over the doctor's head, completely enveloping him beneath its folds, and extinguishing his lantern.

When the old gentleman emerged from his enforced concealment he was in total darkness.

The female figure had disappeared, and he could have gnashed his teeth to think how easily he had been vanquished.

He walked slowly home, and admitted himself with his latchkey. Then he mixed a glass of whisky and water, and sat down quietly by the fire.

He wanted to collect his thoughts. He could not in the least make up his mind whether the woman he had seen was Mrs. Sharpe. If so, she must be living in Vale Lester in concealment, creeping abroad occasionally to pursue her evil deeds. But it seemed well nigh impossible she should dare to remain in the neighbourhood of her crime, knowing the reward offered for her apprehension.

Then, if not Sir George's murderess, who was she?

He was a sensible man, and a cool-headed one. He would have scoffed at the idea that anything supernatural was mixed up in the Vale Lester tragedy; but of one thing he felt convinced—if this woman was not Mrs. Sharpe, it was some one dressed up to represent her.

Some person, he could not imagine who, had an interest in making Fenella and himself believe that the suspected woman still lurked in the village.

"If only I could tell Lady Lester! But no, it would send her into hysterics. Well, I'll solve the mystery, if I spend all my leisure

time in prowling about Water-lane. If only the jade had not put out my lantern I'd have tracked her to her lair; but she was too clever for me."

He started to his feet. A sudden thought had struck him.

The grey shawl, the cause of his defeat, would surely be a clue to its late wearer.

He had brought it in with him because he thought it would at least deprive Mrs. Sharpe of her disguise, and prevent her from frightening any more horses; but the idea of its tracing its late wearer's identity had only just occurred to him.

He dragged the shawl in and examined it carefully by the gas.

It was not as he had guessed at first—two ordinary woman's shawls sewn together—but a large and handsome carriage wrapper of that peculiar warmth and softness for which Scotch woollen goods are noted.

"No servant ever bought that out of her wages," was his decision as he began to fold it up. "It would be useless except as a carriage rug; and, besides, is too quiet and sober in colour to please a servant's taste. I will put it carefully away, and try to find out if any one has missed such a thing in the neighbourhood."

But he did not have to make any such inquiries. His doubts were to be set at rest.

In folding the shawl he discovered at one corner two initials worked in crimson silk—"P. L."

Poor Dr. Stone sank back into his arm chair with a groan.

Those letters stood for Percy Lester. Could it be that Fenella was right in her cruel suspicions after all?

(To be continued.)

WHEN SHALL WE TWO MEET AGAIN?

—O—

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"WHERE HAS HE GONE?"

ONLY a waste of tossing waves, only a dark frowning sky—a broken boat—a howling dog—and a man half-distraught with fear!

Weston came running down towards the beach, holding on his hat.

"Just come to say that I've seen the groom from the Castle, sir. Mr. Treherne hasn't been nigh the place since he left last night. He's not at Woodlands. So where is he?" he asked rather breathlessly, because of his run through the wind.

For all answer, Colonel Gordon pointed to the Waterwitch—and Weston's face grew grey. If there was a man upon earth whom he thought more perfect than any other, it was Ronald Treherne. He loved him with the same sort of love as Ponto—and his soul rose up in angry appeal against the conviction that was pressing itself on his slow mind.

"Where is he?" he asked piteously. "No—not there—not there!" looking towards the angry sea, and stretching out his hands as if to repel such an awful thought.

"It's the master's boat sure enough; but who can say that he was in it? who saw him start? I should like to know."

There was a miserable silence, only broken by the noise of the elements, and the pitiful whining of the dog. At last Colonel Gordon roused himself.

"It's no use standing here. We know nothing—we don't know where he went to—or why he went. You go to the station and ask if young Brown went up to town last night. Don't mention Mr. Treherne, but if he went, and they saw him, they will be sure to say so. I'm off to Woodlands, for Sir Thomas was the last person to see him, and I may discover something."

In a few minutes he was back at the Tower, and getting on to Robin Hood, for his own horse was tired. He went off at a moderate pace down the hill, which presently increased to a hard gallop.

Many people looked after him with anxious eyes, feeling sure that something was the matter, as he dashed past the little cottages with a set expression on his face. The children, who scrambled out of his path, missed the kindly nod with which he never failed to greet them—the women noticed that he never looked to right or left, but went on and on as if to escape from some terror that was pursuing him.

"Lukes as if summat had gone wrong with th' manager," said a woman with a worn face, and a coil of red hair at the back of her head.

"Now don't go an start that agen," exclaimed another with a bright pair of eyes. "We've only just got him safe out o' th' mine. Don't seem natural that he should be saved one day, and lost the next."

"On, it's a sad world, and misfortuns come as reglar as day and noight. I've no room left for surprise at 'em."

"Git along with you. I wanna stand here to listen to your croakin'. I'm off to th' mine to pick up any news that be goin'." So saying, she tied a handkerchief over her head, and catching up a basket which contained her husband's supper started with long masculine strides up the road.

Anything is enough to start a report, and it was told from one person to the other that "summat had gone wrong."

Then Weston was seen coming back from the station with such a lagging step, and Heaven-forsaken looking air about him, that the worst fears were suggested. He could only tell the women and men as they crowded round him that Mr. Treherne had left the Tower last night, and there was his blessed boat cast up on the shore as a wreck.

"Is there a man here in this place," he said, raising his head with a sudden hope, "who will stand forth and say that he took that boat for a bit of pleasure? It might be against the rules, but I'd be right glad to hear that he had done it, and never cast it up against him."

"Why, Mr. Weston," exclaimed a miner who had just knocked off work, and was begrimed with dust from head to foot, "the mon what took th' boat is drowned sure enough. He could no more come and tell on himself than a corpse as has been laid under the grass this fortnight."

A shiver ran through the woman. But Weston still fought against despair. "Is there one of the men missing? Just tell me that," he asked as a last hope.

"Never a one," was the answer, and then, as if by common consent, they trooped down towards the shore, where Ponto was still howling at intervals.

"Th' dog knows," said a woman, with a sad shake of her head, and then a silence fell on all, as every face was turned towards the tossing sea, and every heart sank low. There seemed to be nothing to be done. If the manager was drowned no one could bring him to life again, and it was useless to look for his body in that vast expanse of ocean. They separated after a while, and went in parties of twos or threes along the coast. The tide was high, so that it was impossible to pass the headlands which ran into the sea on either side of the little bay—unless they climbed half-way up the cliff. Some of the men clambered at the risk of their necks, others preferred trying the longer way over the tops of the cliffs, but a little knot remained on the beach, and the tears were flowing fast down the women's sunburnt faces.

Meanwhile Colonel Gordon had reached Mountsorrel, and drawn up his panting horse before the portico. He had been cogitating as to whether he should ask for Sir Thomas or Lady Dacre. It was rather a difficult point to decide, the former being such an invalid

that it seemed unadvisable to disturb him, and the latter being a tender-hearted woman whom he did not wish to alarm unnecessarily. Mayhew flung open the door, and deciding in a hurry, he asked if he could see Sir Thomas.

"Very sorry, sir, but Sir Thomas is not well enough to see any one to day."

"Of course not, but just tell him that Colonel Gordon is here, and that he must see him at once," said Gordon imperturbably.

The butler looked inclined to demur—thought better of it, asked the Colonel to step inside, directed a footman to hold his horse, and then disappeared upstairs.

A few minutes later Colonel Gordon was ushered into the Baronet's room. Sir Thomas did not know how to receive his visitor, so retired into a fit of sulks.

The Colonel offended him at the first start by forgetting to ask after his health, or to deplore his sudden flight. He would not sit down as if for a comfortable chat, but stood by the bedside with a fierce expression on his manly face, and asked him after Treherne as if he were accountable for his disappearance.

"What made him leave the house almost as soon as he came in?" he demanded severely.

"How can I tell?" said the Baronet fretfully.

"Of course you can. Did you have any quarrel?" fixing him with his earnest eyes.

"Yes, a few words; he wanted me to vouch for it that he couldn't tell a lie. Was it likely? as if I could see into another man's soul."

"What then?" "What then?" he repeated irritably. "How you do catechise me! He stalked out of the room, if you want to know."

"And very properly too, if you called him a liar in his own house," cried Gordon angrily, as his worst suspicions were aroused.

What was there to quarrel about, unless his identity with Ralph Trevanion were discovered, and if that were found out, wasn't it likely that Treherne would be goaded to desperation, and ready for any act, however reckless?

"Would you object to tell me the cause of quarrel?" he asked, feeling inclined to wring the truth out of the invalid by main force.

"I do object. It's not fair to badger a fellow like this. It's—it's inhuman. I thought you had something of consequence to say to me, or else I never would have let you come up," he went on, querulously.

"And so I have," said Gordon, solemnly. "Dacre, you won't refuse to tell me the truth, when I tell you that I believe the poor fellow's drowned!"

Sir Thomas looked up into the Colonel's agitated face.

"Good Heavens! You don't mean it! No, it can't be true. I won't believe it. You are taking me in!" and the thin hands, which were clutched the bed-clothes, began to shake.

"What drove him to it; that's what I want to know?" went on Gordon, hoarsely, the veins on his forehead standing out like thick cords. "What sent him out on to the sea in the middle of the night, as if there were no shelter for his head on shore? What did you say to the fellow that drove him mad and sent him to his death?"

"Don't, Gordon!" shrinking back as if positively frightened. "I tell you it has nothing to do with me. If he has gone out in a boat he will come back. Every man comes back for his dinner."

"The boat has come back without him!" said Gordon, with a groan.

"Then he wasn't in it. Depend on it he's at Woodlands or the Castle, as safe and sound as possible. You see," speaking as persuasively as he could, in order to get the horrid idea of Treherne's death out of Gordon's head as well as his own, "he is such a popular fellow, every one is glad to have him. Verreker's caught hold of him. Ah, you never thought of that. He always has some panper on hand,

ready to be dragged down a staircase or lifted into a carriage. Do go and see if Verreker knows anything about him. I'm sure he's all right; he's not the sort of man to drown?"

Gordon looked at the Baronet straight in the face.

"If you've driven that poor fellow to his death, may you have no peace either in this world or the next," he said, tragically.

"Don't, don't!" cried Sir Thomas, shrilly, as the sweat broke out on his brow. "You've no right to say that. I say, Gordon, do you hear? you've no right to talk to me like that!"

But Gordon did not hear. Finding that he could get no more information from the Baronet he left the room quickly, ran down the stairs, and mounted his horse without waiting for anything.

He had two reasons for this haste. One was that he was anxious to avoid Lady Dacre, whose peace he did not wish to disturb till the worst fears were realised, and the other that he thought Paul Verreker might possibly be able to help him.

When he reached the Rectory Mr. Verreker came out to the door with a cordial greeting, but the smile vanished from his face when he heard the Colonel's errand.

He could tell him nothing of Treherne, not having seen him since the accident. He called for his horse, and said he would ride back to the Tower with Gordon, as he felt that he could not possibly settle down to write a sermon when he did not know if his friend were dead or alive.

When they reached Broadbent they heard the patter of hoofs behind them, but it was getting so dark that they could not see who it was that was pursuing them.

They both pulled up, and waited in the vague hope that it was some messenger sent after them with tidings.

But as the sound came nearer Gordon wished himself miles away, for he saw that it was Hilda Romer. Her beautiful hair was flying in the wind, her pony's flanks were flecked with foam; but her face was white and piteous as she drew rein close to the Colonel, and looked up into his face with a wild appeal in her eyes.

"Is it true what they say?" she asked, with a break in her sweet, young voice.

"No—no—no!" said Gordon, gently guessing at what she meant, for indeed there was no need for explanation.

There was no other man but Treherne who could have brought that young girl so far from home at that time in the evening by the strong interest she felt in his fate.

"We hope he has gone to London, or some other place. No doubt we shall hear from him to-morrow, and if we do," trying to speak cheerfully, "I promise to let you know, and now, my dear child, pray go home. What does your father say to your being out at such a time of night alone?"

"Wilfred sent me, and papa's away. You are not deceiving me, are you?" trying to find out the expression of his face, which was half hidden by the broad brim of his hat.

"It is what we both hope, isn't it, Verreker?" turning to Paul, in hopes of getting some help from him, for anything like deceit was almost impossible to the Colonel.

"Indeed, we do. It seems most probable," said Verreker; "but Gordon felt lonely, so I thought I would come up to keep him company."

"I couldn't tell Wilfred anything but the truth," she said, slowly. "It is true, Colonel Gordon."

"Pon my soul—I hope it is. I wish I could take you home, Miss Romer, but Verreker's going to dine with me."

"Yes, yes," hastily. "Good-night. If you hear anything, you will tell me?" and reassured by that crafty allusion to dinner, she turned her pony's head homewards.

No one would think of dinner if Mr. Treherne were really drowned.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"THE DOG KNOWS."

THERE was a crowd still collected on the beach, in spite of the gathering darkness, when Colonel Gordon and Paul Verreker reached it.

There seemed to be no object in staying there, but they all felt as if it would be a slight to Treherne if they went back to their homes and the comfort of their beds when he might be finding his own bed among the seaweed, with the hard rocks for his pillow.

"My poor people, you had better go to your homes," said Gordon, compassionately. "You will only lose your night's rest, and there's nothing to be done."

"Na, na," said one woman, shaking her head. "He tried to save my Charlie's other day, bless his heart! and I shall never close an eye till I hear what's become of him."

Many others chimed in to the same purpose, and the crowd, instead of lessening, increased.

Ponto suddenly gave up scratching at the boat and stood up on the very edge of the water, straining his canine eyes as if he were able to see something that was hidden from all human ones. He began to quiver from head to tail, uttering little short snaps, as if asking for public attention.

Colonel Gordon watched him eagerly, and presently the Newfoundland ran up to him, put his nose into his hand, then darted back to the water and barked loudly.

"I can't stand it any longer, Verreker!" he exclaimed, suddenly. "I'll have a boat out, take the dog with me, and see what comes of it."

"All right; and I'll come with you," said the young Rector, readily, for inaction seemed worse than anything else during the present weary suspense. "Where's the boat to be found?"

There was a good-sized boat close at hand, and though everyone present knew the danger of launching it in such a sea, Colonel Gordon could have taken his choice from a hundred men at least who were eager to take the oars.

A man with brown plaid trousers came up and specially begged to be allowed to come, but the Colonel said he would not let any of them risk their lives on such a mad venture. Weston should row besides himself, and Mr. Verreker should steer, that would be enough.

They stripped off their coats and waistcoats and gave them with their watches and chains to some of the women to take care of, and then stepped into the boat.

Ponto promptly took up his position in the bows, and never moved, even when a wave came over his black head. He shook his dripping ears and raised one black paw to wipe the wet off his nose, that was all the notice he took of it.

"Colonel Gordon, you will let me come?" said Mr. Harewood, his voice trembling with eagerness. He was already in his shirt-sleeves, one foot was in the water the other over the gunwale.

"No, no, Harewood, you've a wife and some children. Stay where you are," said Gordon, briefly. "Now then, my men, give a hand."

"Oh! for pity's sake, let me come!" he cried, so urgently, that the Colonel had not the heart to send him back when once he had scrambled in. He knew how much he owed to Treherne, and he quite understood his earnest wish to do all he could to repay him.

A hundred eager hands were ready to push off the boat—which at first could scarcely hold its own against the vigorous onset of the waves; but no one had the heart to cheer, for they looked upon this dangerous enterprise, not as a gallant attempt at rescue, but as a desperate effort to bring back the body of their dead manager for decent burial.

The wind had moderated, and instead of shrieking wildly moaned like the mourners at an Eastern funeral, as the boat went slowly

over the crests of the waves, and quickly into the trough between them.

Verreker steered by Ponto's head, for the dog was always looking westwards, with an eager penetrating gaze, as if some instinct made him see his beloved master somewhere in that vast expanse of tossing waters, in spite of the fast increasing darkness.

Paul Verreker was soon drenched to the skin, and shivering with cold, for he had no active exercise like the rowers to keep his blood circulating.

The sky was of a dull leaden grey, without one single star. The lights in the houses at Stanpoole and in the Hall at Mountsorrel twinkled amongst the pines like glow-worms amidst the shadows.

There was generally a light on the flag-staff at the Tower. It had been fixed there by Treherne in the hope that it would be of some service to those at sea, and he made a point of its never being forgotten; but no one had thought of it to-night, and the Tower was wrapped in darkness.

Down below on the shore some peat-fires had been lighted by those on watch, and dusky figures sometimes stood out in bold relief against the lurid light, to be lost the next moment behind a pile of salt water.

Gordon looked over his shoulder, and glanced across at the lights of Mountsorrel.

"Poor girl!" he said to himself, as he pulled a long stroke, and being well supported by Harewood and Weston, sent the boat bounding over the crest of a huge billow—"Does she know that she has lost him now for ever?"

If his eyes could have traversed that mile of sea, and penetrated through the thick grey walls of the old hall, he might have seen Lady Dacre come out of the drawing room with a white face and ask Mayhew if there were any news in the village. She had overheard some scraps of a dialogue which had been going on in the hall between the butler and some one who had come up with a parcel. Something was distressing, something was an awful calamity, but she could not tell what, and remembering the awful look on Treherne's face when she last saw him, she jumped to the conclusion that some terrible misfortune had come upon him.

"We don't know if it's true, my lady," said Mayhew, cautiously—not because any report had reached his ears that his mistress was specially interested in Mr. Treherne—but simply for the reason that he thought every woman was a bundle of nerves, and ought to be treated accordingly; "but they do say as how Mr. Treherne's boat has come back bottom upwards, and nobody's sure that he wasn't in it."

She felt as if she knew it was true—she had seen his face, she knew his recklessness—she knew the desperate position in which he might have been placed at any moment, and the marble flooring of the spacious hall seemed to be rocking like the surface of the ocean—and the ceiling above giving way as she sank in a heap at the butler's feet.

"I ought to have known better!" he exclaimed in utter consternation. "Women-folk can't stand the thought of death, even if it happens to a mere stranger."

With kindly intentions they carried their mistress into the drawing-room, and instead of leaving her in merciful oblivion of her sorrow did their best to rouse her to a knowledge of this overwhelming grief. And as she lay on the sofa, white as any lily that had bloomed in the far-off summer, the boat was toiling over the sea struggling against an adverse tide, but urged on by the strength of despair.

No one spoke, much conversation would indeed have been impossible with the noise of the winds and waves; but not a word was uttered, as they passed Stanpoole, and the features of the coast grew more strange and unfamiliar.

Gordon and Harewood—less accustomed to rowing than Weston—began to show decided

symptoms of distress, but no one seemed inclined to give in.

Verreker wondered how long this was to go on.

The sea might have been a Hood of ink for all they could see of its inner depths, and the body of a man, even if they saw it at all, would only look like a tangle of seaweed floating by.

They had set themselves a perfectly hopeless task, and all of them knew it except Ponto.

The Newfoundland was further off from giving in than he ever had been before. He never budged from his position in the bows, with his forepaws on the gunwale, and his black nose pointing westward.

Gordon gave a glance at him, and wondered. Had the Almighty really given a superior instinct to that four-footed animal than to man, with his wonderful powers of brain?

"If it weren't for the dog I declare I'd turn back," he said to himself, and all in the boat secretly shared his sentiments.

Arms and backs were aching madly, and muscles were feeling strained; but on they went without a murmur, till perseverance began to look like absolute folly.

They were near to two large rocks which stood out in the sea, quite a mile or more from the coast, like the columns of some gigantic broken arch.

They went by the name of the "Two Maidens," because so many vessels had been wrecked by running into them on a foggy night, and they were supposed to have lured the sailors to their doom like the mermaids of old.

"Ware the Maidens," said Gordon, gruffly, fearing that Verreker might not see them in the darkness. "After this, perhaps we had better turn back," he added with a sigh.

Could he bear the thought that never again—either at Woodlands or the Tower—would he hear Treherne's welcoming shout? never have him to appeal to in moments of difficulty? never again share a trouble or a joy with him?

He bent his head as a salt tear ran down to meet the drops of salt water on cheek and beard.

No one could tell what a loss this friend would be to him, and not another soul on earth could make up for him. And yet what was his trouble compared with Lady Dacre's, if she only knew?

"Do you really mean to turn back?" Verreker asked as they passed close to the larger of the Two Maidens.

"Yes," said Gordon, an assent wrung from him by the depths of his despair.

A quick, sharp bark from Ponto startled them all, and the next moment they saw the dog jump into the water with a resounding splash.

"Ponto! Ponto! come back!" cried Weston.

"Leave the dog alone," said Gordon in an unsteady voice, as he watched his movements with keenest interest.

The splashing ceased, so he was probably on the rock.

Yes. The next moment they saw his silhouette plainly visible on the top of the rock against the sky.

He turned and looked at them, as if inviting them to follow, wagged his tail, and disappeared.

"Quick, Verreker! To the other side!" cried the Colonel, hoarsely, as a spasm of hope shot through his heart.

The boat's head shot round the Maidens, and soon they brought up broadside against the inner side of the rock, where there was a grassy slope, on which some sea-pinks were blowing.

Here it was quite accessible to the sea; and, holding on to the tufts of grass, Gordon scrambled off the boat on to the rock.

What was this at his feet—some dark form—which Ponto was looking frantically?

The Colonel's legs began to shake like a girl's as he knelt and put out his hands to feel.

The first thing he touched was a head; and as he peered through the dense darkness he saw that the hair seemed white, and the face like the one he loved!

"He's here!" he said, with a great gulp in his throat; "but I don't know if he's dead or alive! Anyone got some matches?"

Weston had fortunately kept on a thick pea-jacket, and he found an old lucifer box in the pocket.

He got out of the boat, and tried to strike them with trembling hands, but the wind blew them out as soon as they were lighted.

"It's only a faint," he said, almost resentfully. "Do you think the dog wouldn't know better than to wag his tail over his master's corpse? It's a pull out of my flask he's wanting, and by the luckiest chance I've got it here."

"Give it me," said Gordon, hastily, and he forced a few drops through the pale lips.

In another minute the blue eyes opened, and Treherne looked up into his old friend's face.

"What is this?" he asked, in bewilderment. "How did I come here?"

"That you shall tell us as soon as we've brought you home. Do you think you can manage to get into the boat?" he asked, quietly, though from his heart rose up a wild pean of joy for the friend given back to him from the jaws of death.

"I'll manage it somehow."

"You needn't stand, just slide down into it. I'll promise to keep it steady. Out of the way Ponto!"

Very carefully they got him in, for his limbs seemed cramped and stiff, and one false step meant death in that cruel sea; and then with light hearts they started for Broadbent.

They had not out in sorrow to find the dead, they came back in joy with the living. Gordon meant to give that dog a hug as soon as he got him in private.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE BARONET ON THORNS.

COLONEL GORDON felt a decidedly uncomfortable feeling in his throat when the miners and their wives gathered round him, having kept watch all through that miserable night.

They gave a shout which startled the gulls from their nests, and seemed as if they would tear Treherne to pieces as soon as they saw him.

The women laughed and cried hysterically, the men stretched out their brawny arms, and catching him up as if he had been a child, tramped up the beach, and then up the steep path to the door of the Tower.

Weston flung it open, and they deposited him with wonderful gentleness on the first chair they could find.

"Now, mates, we'll be off," said Matthew Hewitt, one of the oldest hands at the mine, touching his forehead. "Our company 'll be better than our praisance, I'm thinkin', and we ain't got such a powerful time for sleep."

He was making his way to the door, when Treherne raised himself, as if to stop him, and looked at Gordon. The Colonel understood exactly what he meant, and said quickly.

"All those who've been out to-night may knock off their morning's work, but keep the day's pay."

A murmur of hearty thanks ran from one to the other. It was a curious scene, the women with shawls over their heads peering in at the door, whilst others pressed up behind them.

Treherne, with his refined beauty, his face as white as his hair, leaning limply back against the carved wood-work of the chair. The Colonel standing close beside him, with a look of the utmost tenderness in his manly face.

Paul Verreker shivering over the fireless grate, with his coat and waistcoat on his arm, but with a smile of infinite content on his well-cut lips, and the miners just opposite to

him in vivid contrast with their broad shoulders, and their air of muscular strength, with rugged features softened by the expression that crept across them as they looked at the man whom they had almost been certain that they would never meet again.

"And now," said the Colonel, on hospitality intent, "just make yourselves as comfortable as you can on the grass, and Weston shall give you some beer to drink Mr. Treherne's health."

This proposition was received by the men with cordial pleasure, but the women slipped quietly away, anxious to get home to their children, and perfectly satisfied with the knowledge that the man was safe.

The men all stood up with their glasses in their hands, and gave three hearty cheers for Mr. Treherne, whom they considered the hero of the night, and three more for the Colonel, whose kind heart had won their affection.

And then they trooped off down the hill, breaking into the silence of the night with snatches of songs, perfectly heedless of the slumbers of anybody else, because they themselves were wide awake, and Treherne was safe after all.

The man with the brown plaid trousers sang the loudest of them all, and seemed the most excited; but he was not amongst those who carried Treherne, and he did not venture inside the hall-door.

His name was James Anderson, and he had a wife and large family of untidy children. Though he received good pay for his work at the mine his family always seemed to be in want, and his children's clothes were generally in rags.

He was not a favourite with his mates, and although they knew nothing against him, they considered him shifty in his ways, and not to be trusted.

The Rev. Paul Verreker stayed for the rest of the night at the Tower, occupying the bed which Sir Thomas had so lately vacated.

Colonel Gordon was glad that Weston had not prepared it for Treherne, as the mere sight of it might have recalled his trouble too forcibly for him to get any rest.

When he was sure that he was fast asleep the Colonel crept into the room in an old shooting-jacket with his feet thrust into a pair of slippers.

He was tired out, but he never thought of that for a moment as he drew a chair close to the side of the bed, and sat down as noiselessly as he could.

He knew that Treherne must have been driven out into the night by a quarrel with the Baronet, and he wanted to be there when he woke so as to cheer him up and not let him fall back into despondency.

Treherne might have been a little child, and the Colonel his nurse, for no woman could have been more careful of her charge, as he sat there so patiently watching the sleeper's face. It looked sad and very stern, and Gordon's wrath grew hot once more against the man who had set the stamp of sorrow on those perfect features.

He was very troubled in his mind, for it struck him suddenly that there would have been a splendid opportunity for Treherne to disappear if he had gone out alone to look for him.

Nobody need have known that he was alive, and all fear of Sir Thomas would have been over. But, oh! how lonely and empty his life would have been without him.

Could he have borne to stay on at Woodlands and pay periodical visits at the Castle, if he had known that Ronald Treherne was all by himself on some other side of the globe?

Would he have cared to carry on the mine without his constant encouragement and advice, and if he had thrown it up in a fit of the blues what would have become of all the poor miners and their wives and children?

On the other hand, groping in the dark after a mystery which he could not fathom, would it be possible for Treherne to stay there even if he wished to after what had passed in

that interview with the Baronet? These were questions which could not be solved till the morning.

Hilda, I suffered so last night that I could not rest," said Kitty, who looked quite changed from her former vivacious little self, "and I want you to come with me to Mountsorrel. Do you mind?"

"Not at all. I love Lady Dacre, but I can't bear her husband," making as ugly a grimace as she could with her pretty little mouth.

"But I shall be amiable to everybody to-day, for I feel so happy now I know that Mr. Treherne is safe. Wasn't it good of that dear old Colonel to send a message to Wilfred this morning?"

"Hilda, don't lose your heart to Mr. Treherne, it won't pay."

The girl's cheeks looked crimson, but she looked up bravely.

"I may love him as a friend, and I always shall, and I'm not the only person who does. What time would you like to start?"

"Directly; I'm in a perfect fever to see Sir Thomas."

"Rather you than I," answered Hilda, with a merry laugh, which contrasted with Mrs. Gifford's earnestness.

Lady Dacre was unwell, and could not see anybody, they were told on arriving at Mountsorrel.

"I'm so very sorry," exclaimed Hilda, when they were left alone in the drawing room, whilst Mayhew sent upstairs to know if Sir Thomas would see Mrs. Gifford.

"Don't grieve too much, my dear, we can all guess the cause," said Kitty, rather contemptuously. "I suppose she heard that Mr. Treherne was drowned, and nobody has yet undeceived her."

Almost directly afterwards she was ushered up into the invalid's room, and as she cast an anxious glance towards him she saw the object of her visit lying on the blotting-pad in front of him.

It was a photograph of a very good-looking young man, with the name of Ralph Trevanion written underneath.

The Baronet covered it over hastily; but Kitty's eyes were upon him, and she knew exactly where it was hidden under a blue official-looking envelope.

She was sharp enough to pretend that it was tender solicitude for his health alone which had brought her over, and she made minute inquiries as to whether he had suffered from his small journey.

His face was flushed, and his eyes looked heavy, but he said that he felt much better.

"Is it true that Treherne is missing?" he asked, abruptly, with no sign of emotion in his voice or expression.

"What do you mean by 'missing'?" Kitty asked, prepared to be quite offended. "You talk as if Mr. Treherne were one of those unhappy creatures always 'wanted' by the police."

"He may be—one day," said Sir Thomas, grimly. "My wife got hold of an absurd report that the fellow was drowned; but I believe she only said it to annoy me."

"Mr. Treherne was very nearly drowned," said Mrs. Gifford, looking grave, "and we were all desperately cut up about it; but I'm happy to say Colonel Gordon and some others saved him, and I believe none of his miners would go to their beds till they knew if he were dead or alive."

"Humph! I knew he wasn't dead," as if he had had private information from the first. "He wasn't the sort of fellow to drown like a rat. He always had his wits about him."

"But no amount of wits would keep him up if he were miles from shore. Isn't your inkstand falling over, Sir Thomas? Do let me move it for you." She got up from her seat, took hold of the inkstand, and managed to knock the blue envelope on one side. The carte de visite was consequently disclosed, and she gave a little scream of surprise as she

sight of it. "However did that get into your possession?" she exclaimed, as she took it up and examined it closely. "Do you happen to know that it is mine?"

"Do you see who it is?" he said, eagerly clutching her soft, round arm, and watching her face with his hawk-like eyes.

Kitty preserved her composure completely. "It's Mr. Treherne, of course," she said, quietly, as if surprised at the question; "and it was given me by Ralph Trevanion. Why do you look like that? I thought you were quite aware that I knew him out there."

"Why did that scoundrel put his name under it, if it wasn't his own likeness? Just tell me that."

Kitty raised her eyebrows.

"Because I asked him. Even a scoundrel will do as much as that to please a woman if she isn't very ugly. Not that Ralph was a scoundrel, but the dearest old fellow possible."

"Mrs. Gifford, you are not deceiving me?" staring at her pretty face with a puzzled expression on his own. "You wouldn't tell me anything but the truth, would you?"

Kitty put on an admirably well-simulated air of injured innocence.

"Sir Thomas, do you mean to insult me?" "Don't be angry," he pleaded, helplessly. "If you knew how bothered I was you would forgive me. I don't know what to make of it. Can you tell me that you knew these two men out at the Cape?"

"I knew Ralph Trevanion as well as if he were my own brother," she said, with glowing eyes, as she thought of their old friendship. "Ronald Treherne I didn't like half so well," mentally deciding that he changed into Treherne that night on the Kloof when he told her that he loved someone else. "But now, Sir Thomas, having answered your questions, I must ask you to answer mine," she added, quietly, before he had time to analyse her reply. "How did my photograph of Mr. Treherne get into your hands?"

The colour rushed into his face, but he tried to retain his coolness.

"We were both staying in the same house—don't you think it must have slipped amongst my papers by accident?"

"No, I don't," she said, promptly. "That photograph was in my album, and my album never stirred out of my room. You didn't happen to come into my room for the purpose of purloining it," fixing her bright eyes upon him in a way that made him decidedly uncomfortable.

"I needn't assure you that I was never in your room in my life. I didn't exactly know where it was, to tell you the truth," thankful to be able to say so.

"Then I believe that fat footman had something to do with it. I always had my suspicions of him, and he disappeared so suddenly. I shall ask Lord Wildgrave to inquire into this," she said, with an air of grave resolution.

"For Heaven's sake, don't!" he exclaimed, in a sudden panic. "Lord Wildgrave wouldn't like it, and here's your photograph. I'm sure I don't want it," thrusting it into her hand.

"Your friend, the fat footman, thought differently," she said with a malicious smile. "Good-bye, Sir Thomas," enjoying his evident perturbation. "I must be going now, as Hilda is waiting for me; but I shan't let the matter drop," and with a cheerful nod she left the room.

"Plague take the girl! She'll get me into such a hole as I shall never get out of!" he exclaimed, wrathfully. "If Wildgrave once hears of this he'll never speak to me again!"

(To be continued.)

FLOWERS of rhetoric in sermons and serious discourses are like the blue and red flowers in corn, pleasing to those who come only for amusement, but prejudicial to him who would reap profit from them.

THE LITTLE HIGH CHAIR.

—C—

THERE was an auction at one of the cheap auction houses, recently. A pale, sad-faced woman, in a plain, cotton gown, stood in a crowd. The loud-voiced auctioneer finally came to a lot of plain and somewhat worn furniture. It had belonged to the pale woman, and was being sold to satisfy the mortgage on it.

One by one the articles were sold. The old bureau to one, the easy rocker to another, and the bedstead to a third. Finally the auctioneer hauled out a child's high chair. It was old and rickety, and as the auctioneer held it up everybody laughed—everybody excepting the pale-faced woman. A tear trickled down her cheek.

The auctioneer saw it, and somehow a lump seemed to come up in his throat, and his gruff voice grew soft. He remembered a little high chair at home, and how it once filled his life with sunshine.

It was empty now. The baby laugh, the two little hands that were once held out to greet "papa" from the high chair were gone for ever. He saw the pale-faced woman's piteous looks, and knew that in her eye the rickety chair was more precious than if it had been made of gold and studded with diamonds.

In imagination he could see the little dimpled cherub which it once held; could see the chubby little fists grasp the tin rattle box and pound the chair full of nicks; could see the little feet which had rubbed the paint off the legs; could hear the crowing and laughing in glee—and now—the little high chair was empty. He knew there was an aching void in the pale-faced woman's heart; there was in his own.

Somehow the day may come and go, but you never get over it. There is no one to dress in the morning, no one to put to bed at night.

"Don't laugh!" said the auctioneer, softly, as somebody facetiously offered a shilling. "many of you have empty high chairs at home which money would not tempt you to part with." Then he handed the clerk a paper out of his own pocket, and remarked, "Sold to the lady over there," and as the pale-faced woman walked out with the little high chair clasped in her arms, and tears streaming down her cheeks, the crowd stood back respectfully.

HOW SHE ATTRACTED NOTICE.

—O—

THE owner of a large retail store gave a holiday to all his employés. Cashiers, foremen, salesmen and women, cash boys and porters, all were invited to spend the day on the grounds of the country seat owned by their employer.

Tents were erected, a bountiful dinner and supper were provided, a band was stationed in the grove, and special trains were chartered to carry the guests to the country and home again.

Nothing else was talked of for weeks before the happy day. The saleswomen, most of whom were young, anxiously planned their dresses, and bought cheap and pretty muslins, which they made up in the evening, that they might look fresh and gay. Even the cash boys bought new cravats and hats for the occasion.

There was one girl, whom we shall call Jane, who could not indulge herself in any pretty bit of finery.

She was the only child of a widowed mother who was paralyzed.

Jane was quick and industrious, but she had been but a few months in the store, and her wages barely kept her and her mother from want.

"What shall you wear?" said the girl who

stood next her behind the counter. "I bought such a lovely blue lawn."

"I have nothing but this," said Jane, glancing down at her rusty black merino.

"But that is a winter dress! You will melt, child! There will be dancing and boating and croquet. You must have a summer gown, or else don't go."

Girls of fifteen like pretty gowns.

Jane said nothing for a few minutes.

"I shall wear this," she said, firmly; "and I think I will go. Mother wishes it."

"But you can't dance or play croquet in that dress."

"It is always fun to see other people have fun," said Jane, bravely.

The day came, bright and hot, and Jane went in her heavy, well-darned dress. She gave up all idea of fun for herself, and set to work to help the others find it.

In the train she busied herself in finding seats for the little girls and helping the servants with the baskets of provisions. On the grounds she started games for the children, ran to lay the table, brought water to the old ladies, was ready to pin up torn gowns, or to applaud a "good ball." She laughed, and was happy and friendly all the time. She did not dance nor play, but she was surrounded by a cheerful, merry group wherever she went.

On the way home to town the employer, who was a shrewd business man, beckoned to his superintendent.

"There is one girl here whose friendly, polite manner is very remarkable. She will be valuable to me as a saleswoman. Give her a good position. That young woman in black," and he pointed her out.

The next day Jane was promoted into one of the most important departments, and since that time her success has been steady.

The good nature and kindness of heart which enabled her to "find fun in seeing others have fun" were the best capital for her in her business. She had the courage, too, to disregard poverty and to make the best of life, a courage which rarely fails to meet its reward.

THE SECRET WHICH PARTED THEM.

—O—

CHAPTER X.

As he sat now looking at the grand but awesome scene, with his pipe in his mouth, under shelter, he thought of that other storm far less intense than this, after which the doctor had found him; and he lived over again that fearful agony of mind which he had then suffered.

Even now his mental pain wrung hot drops from his brow. Great Heaven! How he had loved his wife.

How in truth he loved her still, even though he would in no wise acknowledge it to himself.

Colonel Vivian had not found it the easy task he had anticipated to shut Lady Constance out of his heart.

He was obliged constantly to assure himself that she was nothing to him, simply because that heart cried out that she was so very, very much.

A great shivering sigh broke from his breast. The loving bright face was there before him with its innocent child-like faith in him. The look which he knew so well when the love of both was new; now it had waxed cold.

So he assured himself again and again. It was all over—the love, the faith, the happy life of peace, pleasure, and mutual confidence. How could it be anything but over, when his wife, who used to care for him so dearly, looked upon him as an obstacle, and loved Viscount Venwood with all the strength of her powerful nature? and another impatient sigh broke from him, and the wind joined in his complaint, the storm in his fierce anger.

Sir John Eustace was a good sailor. He loved the sea, and made a right down good Captain to his yacht, and to his men, who every one of them loved him and his bonny violet-eyed daughter, who ever had a kind word and a bright look for them all.

A crisp breeze enabled them to sail through the Needles, a feat for which Sir John took some credit to himself, then on through the channel, making more than average progress.

Stella began to forget her troubles as the stars shone out one by one and looked at her.

The evening air was cool, sweet, and refreshing.

Sir John came and sat beside her.

They appeared to be alone on that broad expanse of waters, upon which the Queen of the night cast her clear soft, white radiance.

The baronet and his daughter both felt the influence of the scene, and sat together in silence hand clasped in hand.

Stella, he said at length, "you must not think me unkind that I cannot consent to an engagement between you and the Viscount; believe me I would not deny you any happiness if I could help it, but the Earl of Douglas is a hard man, and he would never welcome my child as his daughter, no dear girl, it would not be for your good to enter that family."

He spoke with warmth and decision, and the girl laid her head lovingly upon his shoulder.

"Father," she said, "why should the Earl object to me?"

"Simply darling, because you are my daughter."

"But you, my dear dad, have never surely wronged him? No, I will go bail that you have not, so why should he have any unkind feeling towards you?"

"Ah! why indeed. There are some people who never forgive those they have wronged."

"And is that his case father?"

"It is, Lord Douglas behaved very cruelly towards me."

"But you forgive him, dear?"

There was a long pause, then he spoke again.

"My child I never meant you to know the history of my life sorrow, but unless I leave you to think me hard and unkind, I must tell it to you, that you may not misjudge me; for you, little one, are all I have to love in this world."

"And I love you dearly in return."

"Dad, let me share your trouble whatever it is. I should be so glad if my affection can in any way help you."

"You shall share it child."

"You know what love is, and will scarcely wonder that I have suffered."

The girl crept a little more closely to him, and pressed the hand she held, and he continued in a dreamy far off way, as though he was recalling the past to himself rather than speaking to her.

"It was on just such a night as this that I told her of my deep affection."

"There was no yacht and no sea of course, but the summer breezes were blowing, wafting us the scent of the blossom of the lime trees and the garden flowers."

"The stars were glinting over head, and Gwendoline was by my side, as you are child, her hand in mine, her dear head resting upon my shoulder."

"Oh! how we loved one another, and how bright the world seemed then."

"My darling promised that night to be my wife, and my contentment was complete. It was too great to last."

"There were difficulties made. I was not a rich man then, except in the love of my dear girl, and my mother; in those two things I was rich indeed, but I was obliged to leave England to attend to some business for my father, and during my absence, both death, treachery, and disappointment stepped in."

"My angel mother died."

"Had she lived the train of events which followed could never have taken place, and

Gwendoline and I might have been spared much misery."

"Father," whispered the girl, "mother's name was Stella, like mine, who was Gwendoline? Was not mother your first love?"

"No, child; that is why I never wished to tell you. She never knew that I had loved before—I could not have dimmed her happiness by such a thought, for I was *her* all, dear innocent woman. She had no past memories to dim her joy, as I had; still, no one can be mated with a perfect woman, and not feel the better for her gentle influence. I learned at that time to forgive the injury which I can never by any possibility forget."

"And who was Gwendoline, dear dad, and why did you not wed her after all?"

"To answer your last question first. I did not marry my darling, because she was taken from me by false representations. My death was reported, and I was mourned as one 'gone on before.' My darling was a 'widow indeed,' in heart, but trouble overtook her parents, and she sacrificed herself to save them."

"Oh, father! and you were not dead! How hard it was upon you; and how wicked of those who deceived her," murmured the girl, with feeling.

"No, I was not dead—that is self evident," a faint smile playing upon his handsome features.

"And you returned to find her married?"

"Almost worse than that. I went back on the eve of her wedding day. That meeting was cruel joy to us both. Never shall I forget the agony of that hour. He entered, and found my darling in my arms, my precious one who had given me her love under the starlit heavens. She fled from us with a face of despair."

"My child, can you picture to yourself a more painful position? She had plighted her troth to me, and I had returned from the dead to claim her, only to find her on the eve of marriage with another."

"That other and I were left face to face. God is our judge, I cannot tell you whether Lord Douglas was a deceiver, or whether he was himself deceived. All I do know is I pleaded for her as a craven would do for his life."

"There was no plea I did not set forward to soften his heart, but it was as a nether mill-stone. He had fairly bought my darling, yes, bought and paid for her, and he would not give her up, although he knew that her love was not his but mine. Let me draw the curtain of time over the agony of that night."

A quiver of pain ran through the strong frame, a shivering sigh mingled with the passing breeze, then a clear, girlish voice was heard in the evening air.

"Dad, you said Lord Douglas, surely he did not rob you of the woman you loved?"

"Yes! Stella, my one and only love is the mother of Viscount Venwood, the Countess of Douglas. You have never met her child, but she is a beautiful woman and has a grand character. She would have welcomed you Stella, if only for my sake."

Miss Eustace's eyes were sad and pensive, she watched a silver, moon-shed ladder of light, which led straight from the "Mermaid's" prow to the presence of the night queen herself, in an uninterrupted line of brightness.

"Poor mother," she murmured, "how blessed a thing it was for her to die!"

"Nay, child, she was truly happy, and Heaven knows I mourned her."

"He saved her a bitter awakening, father, sooner or later she would have learnt the truth, and her gentle heart would have bled!"

At that moment it was not of her father's sufferings she thought, nor of those of her lover's mother, but the young wife who gave all in exchange for a shadow, who cherished a mirage, and worshipped a phantom.

Suddenly she raised her head and looked into the baronet's face.

"Dad, how unwise of you to have married without love, how great a risk, and how unlike your usual truth. Why did you do it?"

"That is very simply told my girl. If when you hear all, you blame me, then I must bear your censure. I have told you that my mother died."

The blow was a heavy one to my father, and when he heard too that I too was lost to him, he unwisely tried to console himself, or rather, he allowed a young woman to console him. He married her and her consolation very soon ceased. She was a gay, worldly, frivolous girl, and the life at the old Manor House was not to her mind. That being the case my weak-minded father consented to leave the soil where he had been planted in infancy and had taken root.

"He did not live long to indulge his young wife."

"Soon after his death a letter came from Australia announcing the advent of Miss Fairley."

Her name was quite familiar to me. Her father and mine had been chums at college together, and a real affection had existed between them. But Horace Fairley was a poor man, and he had done that unwise thing—fallen in love with a pretty face and a gentle spirit, with no accompaniment of the chink of coins or the rustle of banknotes.

"So he married and emigrated, and thus settled the subject of what was to become of him."

"Out in that new world, where no man is beyond fighting for himself in the battle of life, he fought and prospered for a time."

"He built their home with his own hands, and planned his farm, and laid out his garden, and did his daily work with spirit till his wife was taken from him."

"Then his energies failed."

"He became an old man in his prime, and his little daughter Stella had no power to really cheer him."

"He was not long in following the wife of his love over the mysterious Borderland which divides time from eternity, and by her father's will the sad child, then nearly fifteen, was sent to England to the guardian whom he had elected for her, Sir John Eustace, my father. He, too, was dead when Stella arrived, so he could not meet her."

"I did so, and the sad, wistful-eyed girl clung to me for affection and protection."

"I gave her both, and never had cause to regret it. Moreover, I tried to do my best for her."

"Had my father's widow been a different sort of woman, I should have asked her to take charge of the orphan, but she was in no wise fitted to the trust, so I went to a lady who had once been a governess to my dear mother, who, although aged then, kept a school."

"My mother had, I remembered, a kindly regard for her, so I thought I could not do better than take the poor girl there."

"She shed tears when I left her, and those tears and the pathetic eyes drew me back often."

"Very soon I saw that she loved me—that all the lonely little heart was centred upon me, unworthy as I was of it."

"At first it troubled me greatly. With my feelings towards Gwendoline I felt that I could not marry any one else, but there was something very soothing in the trustful affection of sweet Stella Fairley, and I ever sought her society more. First, only for her sake, that I might comfort her; later, because she did me good. Yes, she was as the music which quieted King Saul's restless spirit. She softened my hard moods, and made a better man of me."

"When she left school she did so as my wife. It seemed best for her, and it was best for me, too. You came, my child, a small hostage to fortune, and my wife placed you in my arms and craved my love for you. But my Stella-mother was too tender and sweet for earth."

"When I look up at the great, soft, lustrous evening star, I feel as though my angel-partner had found her place there, and could fancy I could see her smile in the tender radiance which it sheds around."

"She loved me fondly to the end—and I?"

"Well, darling, my affection for her was as soft and protecting as though I had been her mother and she my babe. The passionate love of my manhood rested hopelessly upon that other, and will while life lasts. To some natures change is pleasant, to others, there is no change."

"That is so with me, while memory lingers. Gwendoline will be to me what she was upon that night like this, twenty-three years ago, when we wandered hand in hand under the scented lime trees, and talked of our future together, with quickened pulses and wildly beating hearts."

"Heaven knew how I loved her then, and knows how I love her still. The touch of her passing draperies in a crowded assembly stirs more feeling in me than the softest words and looks from any other woman."

"Oh, dad! what a shocking admission," said the girl, a smile breaking out over the sweet young face. "So the ladies make love to you, and you tell!"

Sir John joined in the laugh against himself, but soon relapsed into a saddened mood and continued his conversation.

"Now, Stella, be my judge—in my place what would you have done? married the gentle evening star, or let her pine in sadness and alone. Remember I could take care of her in no other way."

"I think you were right," she said, after time for thought, "and father, I think the best part of you—your spirit loved my mother as it could never have done another woman of a more material nature."

"It is said that the gods love those whom they take young, that is, they see their perfection, and transplant them to a region where their sensitive organization will not suffer."

"My sweet mother is at rest, and it is better so, from this time forward I shall always think of her by the name you have given her, the soft and radiant evening star."

CHAPTER XI.

LEONI ANGELO was somewhat surprised at London, after the quiet and retired life he had lived with his mother in sunny Italy.

Still, he was a handsome, agreeable, gentlemanly fellow, and he very soon made friends for himself, besides which the death of his kinawoman had levelled the anger of the Count, who had attended her funeral, and made the acquaintance of her son for the first time.

Hearing from him that he was about to start for England, the old nobleman gave him an introduction to the Italian consul, and a few others among whom was Sir John Eustace, to whom he had paid attention upon his native soil, when the "Mermaid" had more than once anchored in the Bay of Naples.

Sir John was, as we know, away from London, but there were others left to welcome him, and before long he had settled down in an artistic and pretty little flat as could have been found in the west-end.

He knew little or nothing of the value of money, having lived with his mother, and her savings would not have lasted long had he had nothing to augment them, but he was a born artist, and those who saw his pictures advised him to make art his profession and object in life.

Fortunately for him the Italian Exhibition was about to be opened, and his works were not only got in, but with the Consul as his friend, they were every where placed to advantage.

The result was that before the exhibition had been opened a month he had so many

orders to execute that he really had no time to breathe.

Still, he in no wise quarrelled with his good fortune, but worked away with spirit and energy, and, better by far, his pictures gave satisfaction.

He had been especially fortunate with one. A life study of a woman's head, and that woman was his own mother.

He had painted it partly from memory and partly from a vivid sketch he had of her, which she had given him in childhood, which was his greatest treasure, and was his travelling companion.

Every one wanted that head, with its exquisite almond eyes and the never to be forgotten face so full of soul, expression, and feeling.

Every one of course could not have it, but he could copy it, and he did, over and over again.

One of his friends one day congratulated him upon having a picture in the Royal Academy, and he laughingly replied that he only wished that such was the case, but that he had not even been in England at the time the picture had been sent in for that exhibition.

His friend looked fairly puzzled.

"I did not notice the name of the artist," he said, "but whoever painted it, copied from the same model as you took your much admired head from, of that there is no question."

There is the same somewhat elevated pose of the chin, the same rare smile upon the lips; the same wistful tenderness in the soft brown clear eyes; the same ivory hued complexion.

There could not be the two women found with such faces, one is enough for a life time, a man might be content to gaze at that for the rest of his days."

"Thank you," replied Leoni, with feeling. "You praise my own mother, and you cannot do so too highly, for her mind was as beautiful as her body. Sweet madre," he ended with a sigh, "you can perhaps fancy what it was to me to lose her."

"It is sad to think that so fair a flower could fade. I am sorry for you Angelo, but you must come and see this picture for yourself," and linking his hand within his arm, he led him off to Burlington House, and never stopped until he stood before the study in question.

Leoni stood in front of it in silent wonder.

It was undoubtedly his mother, but who had painted it he could not guess. He obtained a catalogue, and having found the number, he gazed at the page steadfastly and in bewilderment for there before him he read:

"Signorina-Marie Angelo."

By C. VIVIAN.

Who was C. Vivian, and why was his mother entered as Signorina?

For the first time it flashed through his mind that she had been living under her maiden name, unless indeed her husband had been a cousin, and she had not changed it.

If this was the case, he did not know to what name he had a right.

He remembered how she had hoped she had not erred in keeping him from his father's people, who were no friends to her.

In his sorrow at losing her he had not thought of asking for any information which it troubled her to give, and now it came home to him that he knew absolutely nothing of his history, beyond the fact that Count Angelo was his kinsman, and he determined to write to the Count that very night to ask who and what his father had been; and even then he felt to wondering what cause of quarrel there had been between his mother and the Count.

His friend stood by, amused at his confusion.

"Well, Angelo, have you arrived at the bottom of the mystery?" he enquired.

"The Lady is my mother," he returned evasively.

"Ah! I see, taken before her marriage, or

possibly the painter saw no difference between a Signorina and a Signorina."

"Very possibly not, but I cannot tell you when the picture was taken, for I do not know. I shall be obliged if you can inform me who the artist is."

"Can't say, my dear boy, but so doubt you may be able to find out full particulars if you have a mind to become the purchaser. Now I must leave you, I have an engagement of a very particular nature, and I cannot offer to take you with me, so, *au revoir*," and with a familiar nod, away he went, leaving Leoni alone.

An hour later there was a red star attached to the portrait of Signorina Marie Angelo, and Leoni left Burlington House with an address in his pocket.

It was that of a solicitor, and calling a hansom, he drove there at once.

The solicitor himself was out, but his clerk seemed in a confidential mood.

He did not in the least know who C. Vivian was, but he was sure that it was a lady, and he had caught sight of a letter addressed to her to Llanrooken Bay, North Wales, and he added that several people had been to order pictures of her, but that his chief, Mr. Fraser would give no information concerning her, all orders had to go through him.

From what he could make out she was some swell, and when the picture was sent to the Academy it was not for sale, nor would she have taken orders, but something had she thought gone wrong with her. She had had domestic disturbance at home or something, but he added, he would 'get the sack' if Mr. Fraser knew that he had been chattering about his client's affairs, and Leoni smilingly replied that he would get him into no trouble from his friendly hints, and in return invited the youth to come and see his pictures, which delighted him immensely.

The studio and flat of Signor Angelo were things worth seeing, being arranged in the Italian style, and with perfect taste.

Many a titled lady honoured it with her presence, and the Italian artist promised to be the rage.

He kept his mental vow, and wrote to the Count, waiting in London for his reply.

It came, but it certainly was not satisfactory to Leoni.

"My dear cousin," wrote the old man, "I am surprised to find that your mother has kept you in as great a state of ignorance of her affairs as she has done me, her kinsman, and before your birth, the sole representative of her family."

"As such, in her youth, I tried to persuade her to marry a man well suited to her in wealth and position; but with no good result. She had too strong a will, had my cousin, Marie, and she left Italy against my wishes to become 'companion' to Lady Calhoun, who then resided in England."

"Some few years later she came back to the land of her birth, more than half broken hearted. I saw her once—you were a baby then—all I could learn from her was that although married, she had lost her husband suddenly; and that his family had behaved so ill to him and her, that she never meant them to know of your existence, for fear they should persecute you as they had done her. That, my dear boy, is all I can tell you, and I wish I knew more, for you are my only relation, and one word from me would bring you into royal favour here."

"If I could see some prospect of your holding such a position as my hair could hold, notwithstanding your mother's wilfulness, I should adopt you as my son, for I look a real liking for you. Make it your business to find Lady Calhoun, unravel the mystery, and return to me in your true name, and the full knowledge of your place in society, and you shall receive a cordial welcome from—"

"Your affectionate cousin,

"CARLO ANGELO."

Leoni sat gazing at the kindly words. His Roman blood surged through his veins. He

know how much the old Count was respected at Naples, and thought the position of his heir would be a truly proud one.

Thought too how his mother's face would have brightened at such a prospect for him. But even though his kinsman was ready to receive him, there was a condition attached. He must go to him in his own name, and that must, he felt, be an honoured one.

He must in truth find Lady Caithness. He blamed himself for not having made more progress in his search for her, for she was the friend to whom his mother had sent him.

He had quickly obtained a peerage, and somewhat to his dismay he found there was no Lady Caithness whatever to be found within magic pages, and he had made up his mind that his mother's memory must have failed her, and that she had supplied him with a wrong name.

So he had let the matter rest, but now the Count spoke of the same lady, and he must do his best to find her.

Somehow he thought if he could trace out the painter of his mother's picture he should be on the track of the secret of his birth.

CHAPTER XII.

LEONI ANASTO could scarcely force himself to stop and finish one or two orders which were nearly completed.

He was feverishly anxious to get away to North Wales to look for the painter of his mother's portrait.

He felt that no one could have hit upon such a chance likeness, and that therefore he could have but small difficulty in learning the truth if this lady, C. Vivian, and he met.

As he pushed his things he carefully folded in his breast-pocket a fine cambric handkerchief, having first raised it to his lips just where the name of "Constance" was embroidered, by which it will be seen that he had not in any measure forgotten the lady who had travelled in the train with him one afternoon, as he was journeying London-wards from the North.

In truth there were few days when the sweet, proud face was not before him in its early beauty and exquisite bloom.

Over and over again he had conveyed it to canvas, but so far he had not succeeded in satisfying himself.

He thought much of Constance upon his way to Llanrooken. It seemed as though he could not put her out of his mind, or settle to any other subject; no, not even when he desired to do so, for he greatly wished to think the matter of his passage out, if by any chance he could remember anything more which his mother had said to him from time to time, that he might piece even her words together, to help out the puzzle of who he really was.

The first part of his journey was simple enough.

He had merely to sit in the train and make himself comfortable, but at the end of the railway route he was obliged to travel by coach, and after that to get from Llanrooken to the Bay, and had some difficulty in obtaining any vehicle to take him there.

He would not have objected to the walk, but for having his sketching-cases, &c., &c., with him, besides his bag.

At length he found a young fellow willing to drive him over in a nice little village cart, who promised to bring him back also if he desired to return.

Evening was beginning to close in, before they reached Llanrooken Bay.

There were two ways from Llanrooken to the Bay—one across the country, the other by the sea coast, with a rarely beautiful scene nearly all the way.

It is not to be wondered at that Leoni chose the latter, even though it was a longer distance.

His artistic taste alone would have decided him in that, had not the hand of Fate been leading him on, as assuredly it was.

He was enchanted with the views. The peeps of pine wood, flanked by the blue ocean, of great brown rocks standing out against the not less bright blue sky. The sea itself, stretching into the far, far distance, lost in dim, vaporous mist, and the white-winged boats sailing upon its breast amidst the silver crests of its breakers, the shingle and the golden sands below.

He thought he had never seen a more lovely spot, and only the coming shades of evening prevented his stopping to make a sketch upon the spur of the moment, but he mentally promised himself a day amidst these picturesque scenes, and let himself be driven onwards towards his destination.

At one spot the road along which they had to drive was so narrow and unprotected that the youth told him that they must both dismount, and he would lead the pony past the dangerous point.

Once on foot, Leoni began to linger, first for a wild flower, a look out to sea, and then to gaze down at the depth below, where was seated a lady at her easel, sketching the golden sunset upon the sea.

He halted, and became as interested in her as she was in her work.

The pony and the driver were out of sight, lost to view round the point which formed the extreme angle of the bay, whither he was bound.

There had been no habitations of any sort for some distance, and not one was then in view.

With dusk not far off, in wisdom he should have proceeded upon his way, but instead he stood looking over the cliff at the figure below.

He could not see the face of the artist. It was turned from him, and he could not have recognised his greatest friend down that dizzy height. Still, he thought that the figure seemed to be slight and graceful, and was probably that of a young woman.

The fact of their similarity of taste made him interested in her, and it was not till the driver returned on foot to seek him, having grown uneasy at the unlooked-for delay, that he could tear himself away from the spot, and even then he did not do so until he had detained him to enquire whether he knew the name of the lady artist below, but finding that he could gain no information, he accompanied the lad round the point, where they found the pony tied to a tree stump, and nibbling at a patch of grass, which had found its way into the somewhat barren neighbourhood.

The little animal and his driver were great friends, and he whinnied as he heard their advancing footsteps, gave up the grass, and was soon trotting on his way again.

"Do you know where a lady named Vivian lives?" asked Leoni.

"No sir, I don't, but there is not much choice of houses."

There is one pretty little house in the dell leading to the bay, and half a dozen cottages, that is all."

"And how on earth do people find a living in such a spot?" inquired the visitor.

"Oh! they are fishermen, and trade with Llanrooken."

"I don't see any boats."

"No, they are all out at their work."

They are away two or three days sometimes, and there have been occasions when the boats have never returned at all."

Fishermen haven't a bad lot of roses to sell on, and if they sell their fish dear, they often lose their lives cheap in getting it."

"The lady must live there, sir," as he pulled up to point out an exquisite golden thatched cottage with many gables, verandah, and flower-plot walls, nestling in the midst of a verdant garden, enclosed with laurel hedges, evergreens of considerable growth, and leafy trees.

"What a charming little place," exclaimed Leoni, "and do you not know the name of the lady who resides there?"

The lad shook his head.

"I have never heard it," he returned, "she has not been there long, and the men call her the good lady, and sometimes the pretty lady and they say she is very kind to their wives and children."

"She is young then?" suggested the visitor. "I don't know sir," answered the boy with a puzzled look, "I don't expect she is, as she lives alone."

"What quite alone?"

"She has an elderly woman who does for her. I've seen her in the town, he added," with growing importance.

Then becoming reflective, he began again,—"I suppose the lady can't be very old either sir, as the fishermen call her pretty."

Leoni laughed. "My good fellow," he said, "have you yet to learn that age can be as beautiful as youth? the cheek may not be as smooth, but the expression often far exceeds it in beauty, when the mind is ripening for the harvest."

Then he left off speaking, and laughed again, recognizing the fact that he was talking over the head of his companion, who regarded him with a puzzled look.

By then they had reached the gate which stood invitingly open, for there were neither traps nor stray dogs to keep out at Llanrooken Bay.

The children wandered in sometimes, but they were always welcome, and were regaled with fruit and biscuits, which probably accounted for their losing their way rather often.

The pony trotted up the drive, and was drawn up in front of the door, which was opened before Leoni could knock, by a respectable looking middle-aged woman, who seemed somewhat confused at the sight of him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said. "I quite thought it was my mistress, and that she had got a lift home from somewhere."

Then catching sight of the easel in the trap, she began again.

"I see you have brought her things sir, and that will be a help to her. My lady is a great walker, so I suppose she preferred to remain on foot. Will you please to walk in?"

Leoni went in at once, thinking to have a better talk with the housekeeper alone, than with the driver listening to every word they said.

Nor was he wrong.

His heart gave a bound as he saw upon the wall of the tastefully arranged room, a spirited sketch of his mother, in water-colours, from which there was no doubt whatever, that the picture at the Academy had been painted.

The woman saw that he was attracted by the portrait, and turned to him at once.

"A very beautiful face, sir, is it not?" she asked.

"Most lovely," he replied, "I bought one, which was without doubt painted from it, at the Royal Academy."

"My mistress heard so this morning, at least she heard that it was sold, I should say; and she was very glad. She is not a lady to talk much, but she mentioned that. You see, sir, I lived in the family when she was born, though I left to be married soon after," and the widow sighed.

"Ah! you have had your troubles then," said Leoni, sympathetically.

"Indeed I have, who has not? Her Majesty herself has not been shielded from them, so how can I expect to be?"

"No, they come to us all. I have lately gone through a heavy one. I have lost my mother," said the young man, softly.

"I know what that is too, sir," returned the other, "and I am sorry for you, but there are worse troubles than ours. God sends death—it comes to all—and it is honorable, but there! people have worse to put up with than that. Troubles brought upon them by their nearest and dearest, those must be hard indeed to bear, and the dearer they are, the worse it is. There are many who suffer like that. If we could see the lady who sat for that picture, for instance."



[LEONI'S HEART GAVE A BOUND AS HE SAW UPON THE WALL A PORTRAIT OF HIS MOTHER!]

"I remember her as like that, as two peas in a pod, but if I could see her now, I'll warrant she is sad enough to break her heart, so far as these hearts of ours ever do break. Sometimes I think the expression is a wrong one. Even when I saw her last she was the ghost of herself."

"You remember her! Come, that is good hearing. I have come all this way to learn all I could concerning the lady who sat for that portrait," he said in an agitated voice.

The housekeeper regarded him keenly.

"I do not know much of the affair, sir, I was very young myself at the time, no doubt my mistresses will be able to tell you more than I can do, and more accurately, all I knew was just the talk of the servant's hall. You could not have been a friend of the poor lady's sir, you are too young for that."

"No I am not, indeed. She was the dearest friend I ever had in my life, but she never spoke to me of her early days, you will do me a very great favour if you can tell me anything about them," and he pressed a bank note into the housekeeper's palm as he spoke.

"Thank you, sir, I am sure you are very good," she said, with her most gracious smile. "Money is always acceptable, but there was not the least need. I would have told you all I know with pleasure."

"Thanks if you would do so."

"Well, sir, as you know the lady, you are aware that she was a Miss Angelo, and that she came from Italy. She was not an especial favourite with the servants, they thought her proud for her position in life, and, as a rule English people don't think much of foreigners more especially when they are in a dependant position, for Miss Angelo was my lady's companion, you must know, and received her wages like the rest of us."

"But if the servants didn't think much of her, Lady Caithness did!"

"There was no one like Miss Angelo, and nothing too good for her, and she had that pic-

ture done of her, at the same time the artist came to paint those two, sir, of Lord Caithness and herself; and I have heard her tell visitors that Miss Angelo had more in her little finger than she herself had in her whole head."

"Then all at once she saddened."

"There was a deal of talk of her having a sweetheart, but we never knew for certain who it was, for there is no doubt that several gentlemen admired her and were paying her attentions."

"Those most at the house were a rich commoner Mr. Ringwood, Sir Roger Chetwynd, and Viscount Venwood, and I suppose she was fretting about one of them. When a woman looks miserable, love is generally at the bottom of it."

"But which of them did she marry?" he enquired, eagerly.

"That's more than I can tell you, sir. I never heard that she married at all. There is no doubt that Lady Caithness knew, but she never opened her lips to any one."

"And what became of the three gentlemen you have named?"

"Not much good, sir, I think it unsettled them, they all seemed fond of her. Mr. Ringwood died very young, Sir Roger took to the turf, and Viscount Venwood shot himself. It is a long time ago, but Miss Angelo's name was mixed up with the affair I know, although she had fled from England some months before. I often wondered whether my lady knew what had become of her or no, but I think not, for I often surprised her looking at the picture with tears in her eyes."

"And you really don't know who she married?" repeated Leoni, in a disappointed tone.

"No; in fact, sir, I don't believe she married at all, that was what was said in the servant's hall, but of course it might not have been right. Any way my lady never seemed to get over the loss of her till her little one came to comfort her—that is my present mistress, sir, and a very sweet woman she is."

Leoni Angelo bowed his consent to her theory, but he did so with a preoccupied manner, and a clouded brow.

The housekeeper's words had disheartened him very greatly.

"I see you don't know much of my mistress, sir," she said, in a somewhat aggrieved voice. "Most folks hear her name with a smile, she is a dear, good lady."

"No doubt but Lady Caithness, is she living here too?"

"Bless me, sir, she has been dead for years. I thought you were a friend of the family, or I should not have spoken so freely. As it is, Lady Constance would probably blame me for chattering. My poor husband used to say to me, 'Bessie, my girl, your tongue is a bit too long,' and perhaps he was right after all."

"Lady Constance!" said Leoni, eagerly.

"Was that the name of Lady Caithness's daughter?"

"Why, sir!" replied the woman, impatiently, "you must know that, if you have come here to see her, but I wish to goodness she was home."

"I should be in a rare fidget if she had not sent her easel home by you. It is not safe the way she remains out sketching the sunsets, often till almost dark. She is too young and handsome to go about alone, but she would not thank me for my opinion. I am but a servant and I hold my tongue."

"The easel in the trap is mine, my good woman, not hers, but I believe I saw her sketching beyond the further point of the bay, some one was doing so."

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed the other growing white to her lips.

"Heaven grant that it was not Lady Constance, for the tide has passed the point. I have been watching it dash up over the rocks, and if she is there she is lost, there is not a boat left in the bay," and she burst into a flood of tears.

(To be continued.)



[PATIENCE AND SUE WERE LOCKED IN ONE ANOTHER'S ARMS IN A MOMENT!]

NOVELLETTE—concluded.]

A FISHER'S LASS.

—30—

CHAPTER VIII.

Our party of friends were not long settled in separate lodgings at Scarborough, next door to each other—for Mr. Fargon struck at joint-housekeeping in a furnished house, as proposed by Mrs. Robert—before Richard, nonchalant as ever, joined them.

Mrs. Robert Herringingly was undeniably cool to him, his uncle rather less talkative than usual, while Belle showed evidence of trouble on his account. Her air was tired and languid, and round her eyes were red rims, and this did not tend to heighten her somewhat tame prettiness.

After coming direct from fuller and richer charms Richard found it somewhat hard to carry out successfully his double part. Then, again, it did not add to his comfort that the volatile Tommy was in the condition known as "having his back up;" not a word of inquiry or of friendly cheeriness did that gentleman vouchsafe him, though they played in the same eleven for three consecutive days. Richard would much have preferred having a "few words," than this assumption of ease which was not ease, meted out to him.

Mr. Fargon was openly grumpy, and as for Nelly, what he thought he saw—for a guilty conscience needs no sooner—in her dark eyes upset his dignity more than everything else put together.

He was fast arriving at that stage when men count the cost of their pleasures, and he did not disguise from himself that his was costing him a vast deal more than he had bargained for. Already his private extravagancies were pressing him hard.

A dark look-out this for Patience Merrick,

could she but have seen into her recreant lover's heart at this juncture; but she at least was calm and untroubled save for that one small thorn in her flesh—the continued silence of her own people.

By a singular coincidence old Adam Merrick's death was not recorded in print, and although Patience regularly bought the local paper, she knew as yet nothing of it. Now a small paragraph struck her, relative to some fishing gear, "lately the property of Adam Merrick, now of his son, Tom Merrick."

She read these mysterious lines over and over again, making nothing very clear of them. Had the old dad given up the fishing? And why was this gear now the property of Tom? Tom was the youngest. Where was Jim? She very much wished Roland had been at home, and for once she gave herself up to repining at her lonely lot. She had literally no one to speak to but her servants, or, if she chose, to the undersized clergyman, who had called upon her and offered his friendly services in any emergency.

This course did not occur to her as it might well have done had she liked him better. She should not even know her husband's address for two or three days, so she must disobey his wishes for the first time, by writing again to her old old home.

That she could not help, what she felt worst too, was having to pocket her pride when she was so offended with them for not answering those other two letters. But the creeping suspense that settled down upon and marred every bit of brightness in her life was not to be borne. By nature she was exacting and intolerant of everything that shackled her personal freedom.

And it was such a dull life, this secluded existence in the dainty riverside house which now, in the close, hot days, rendered it difficult for the sea-bred maiden to breathe. The place

was just as dainty, but it closed in upon her and suffocated her; the novelty was gone and she was too much alone.

This solitude was so different to that other solitude she had virtually chosen to adopt by the open sea.

There, every wind that sprang up, every turn of the tide, the very seas and storms, were repeated changes.

Here, all was close and stifling; the very river was confined since she could clearly distinguish people on the opposite banks. Somehow, ran the voice of her discontent, those banks seemed to near in upon her every day, just as in some weird story she had devoured, a coffin smallened each day a little, until its victim went mad with horror.

Those people on the opposite bank were so perpetually gay: they had parties, and sang and danced among the trees. For her there was nothing; even her new dresses became a monotony since there was no one to see them but herself; and then her head developed a knock of aching, a sensation utterly new to her, and in her growing morbidness she wondered if she were going mad like that unhappy wretch in the contracting coffin. Even books palled upon her enjoyment. Somehow, they were all alike, and she grew to loathe the wearying sameness, would listlessly read the last chapters first, then the opening ones, finishing or not, as her temper held out, by the middle part.

For literary merit she cared nothing. Style was a closed appreciation to her. So there was nothing but the story to fall back on—poor, impatient, hungry heart.

She found no pleasure in dusting, arranging, and re-arranging her belongings in the several rooms.

After all, the things looked the same in one place as in another. No sooner had she bought flowers and disposed them in vases of quaint designs than they withered and drooped in the close atmosphere.

And it was but a mockery of relief when she tucked back the deeply frilled curtains and window laces for a little air to force its way in.

She could not always be gardening where the small space restricted her honest labour to a minimum, neither could she be for ever on the river.

This diversion was becoming intolerable to her by reason of much rudeness from other boats—mostly boats sculled by gentlemen rowers, who would persistently follow her and as often as not intrude her in the management thereof.

As the looks and elsewhere her deft and self-reliant craftsmanship elicited murmured plaudits that made her fearless eyes flash resentful fire.

Why should not a woman manage her own boat? and she looked with undisguised scorn on the incompetents who mismanaged theirs, and so nearly came to ignominious grief. And once, when one blunderingly capsized beside her at a lock scrimmage, she laughed aloud as she shot past, others joined freely, and for a moment she was the cynosure of all eyes and the object of any amount of adulatory admiration.

After this, she allowed her little dingy to lie idle at its lawn moorings and hired a boat at the landing stage, but sitting in the stern whilst a Thames boatman made out his hour did not suit her vigorous temperament at all. Her nerve tingled to knock him off the sliding seat and take the sculls herself. Ideal "pleasure" was this to one who could pull a cobble through a pretty high sea and feel no particular strain on the muscles. Yes, she would pocket her pride and write once more to Jen.

Posting it herself no mischance happened to this epistle, and it was duly delivered at her old home.

According to arrangement that if anything came from Patience it was to be opened, Tom Merrick and Sue spelt out the contents carefully.

"Wrote twice afore!" said Sue, eagerly. "No wonder she feels hurt and sore; and she's married, you see, after all. And that!" snapping her hardy fingers, "for all their kindly hints of wickedness. As if a Merrick wasn't too proud for muck o' that sort!"

She was a bonnie fishwife, and one of the photographed beauties of the shop windows, and her nature was pure and true as her clear blue eyes were honest.

"Let's write back, Tom, now—this mornin'. Pore gell! she don't know a word 'bout the feyther's death, not that we'll reproach her aught with bein' a part cause o' that—nor o' our weddin', nor o' Jen's goin' away, nor nothink. And all these blessed weeks we've b'n miscoatin' her right down ornell! We'll set to work, we will," rushing round her bright little best room for writing materials.

"Fancy!" said the smart little woman, "Mrs. Roland Harper!" Don't it look fine now writ out on the envelope? and won't I jest let Martha Trudgate get a glimpse o' afore I drops it into the post-office. 'And who is that you be pennin' to?' she'll ask all o' a Saret with curiosity, and I shall just say, surprised like, and giving her a look as she won't forget in a hurry. 'Why, our Patience, of course.'"

"She'll go run wif' it!" said Tom, chuckling.

"Yes," said Sue, with some heat, "I mean her to. She's bin run' a deal too much a'ready. She's like a carp for off, is Martha Trudgate."

CHAPTER IX.

THREE long dreary weeks elapsed before Patience saw her husband again, and the period to her had passed in a proud sick misery.

She, too, was all too quickly counting the cost of her pleasures, and in no measured mood or calm.

The letter she received from her husband—he who had taken her away from her home in such rapid fashion—had been so cold in answer to the passionate one in which she informed him of her father's death.

This cut her to the heart, and every successive day she read anew Sue's kindly one and contrasted them.

The warmth of the one—and she had alighted them all—only served to render more crushing the coldness of the other one, for whose sake she had given up everything.

Her proportionate gain she did not reckon now, and had not Roland said he might return any day, she would have gone to her people, if only for one sight of her father's grave.

"But," she sadly reflected, "that will wait for me, and perhaps if I am patient he will take me there himself. Why should he be so angry that she had written to them?"

To her it was incomprehensible, but she heartily recalled the fact that he had always been cold about her people.

He was in no pleasant mood when they met, and he was at no pains to hide his dislike of her and face—ready tears and black clothing. He made her feel in a cool, ramping manner that it was only her beauty, and that even at its brightest, that moved him. He gave business reasons for his chafed mood, and asked, petulantly, had she thought him an angel?

"No!" was her acid response, and her sudden scornful silence was scathing.

Two miserable days passed, and once more she was alone—alone and free to think over in amazed review to what pass she had brought herself.

He had raised within this daughter of seakings a spirit he would find it hard indeed to bend or subdue. Better had he lingered awhile instead of leaving her in such hot haste. His passion was dead. Self-interest had killed it; and he knew not how close a revenging Nemesis was upon his track.

She was sitting listlessly upon her couch at the open window of the room facing the river, panting for air, for the August heat was something awful in the stifling closeness of the place she now hated.

Her costume was not so dainty, for sorrow and hot anger combined rendered her comparatively indifferent. Her black robe, faced with white, suited her fairness well enough, but that fairness was dashed with something that marred its sweetness—something, that, given a name, was brooding revenge.

Patience Merrick was not a girl to suffer in silence, and the letter she had that morning received from her husband roused every drop of blood in her to sharp resentment.

What did it mean? Was he leaving her for good that he spoke of money settlements and lawyers? She wanted no money settlements, and she desired the impertinent interference of no lawyers.

Their quarrel was their own. She would be beforehand with him in the leaving. She loathed herself in mad passion; she detested every room in the tiny house, and wondered she could ever have seen any beauty in its cramped proportions.

When he came back at the end of the week he would find no wife to greet him. She dressed herself plainly in her mourning garments, packed herself a few necessities, took what money had been left her, and departed after she had cleverly given both the maid an afternoon's holiday, with instructions to provide themselves with a latch-key lest she should be on the river when they got back.

"Well, this is a queer start and so mistake!" said the elder of them on discovering that it was eleven o'clock, and missus had not come in. "Surely she can't be on the river now!"

"Not she!" said the other, "I told you they'd had a blessed row. I ain't been a parlourmaid for five years for nothing. She've either took on another lover—they all does it, don't you see, sooner or later—or else her

tantrums over and she's gone to join him and make it up."

"I'm not so sure as they ain't married!"

"Not they," said the parlourmaid; "but, oh lor! I wish I was!"

"Well," said the more nervous cook, "What are we to do?"

"Do?" yawning. "Why, eat the rest of this roast duck for our supper, and I'll go and get some wine out of the dining-room, and then we'll go to bed."

"I can't, for the life of me! I feel that nervous. P'raps she's drowned in one of them nasty locks."

"P'raps! I like o' her don't drown, not yet awhile. Why, she'd get a dozen lawmen-morrow if she wanted 'em."

"That ain't everything," said the cook, who had never yet been blessed with one.

"Taint everything," snapped Jane, "but it's a good deal. She ain't drowned, never you wuzit. Her dingy's roped on right enough," jerking her hand riverwards; "so that if she went on the river, which I bet my new bonnet she didn't, she'd a bin with a boatman. All we have to do is to just take things jolly easy till one or other of 'em turns up, which praps they'll do together as lovin' as you please, and praps they won't. I guess it'll be he'll turn up to pay us off and shut up this shop. I shall go in for my back wages and a month to the good. I shall swear she ain't paid me nothink since here I've been. She wasn't jist coming enough to get a nip out o' me."

"Well, if you do, I shall," said cook, philosophically. "I can't afford to be a loser. I'm sure I thought we was settled down for good, I did."

Jane laughed.

"I didn't," she said, counting on her fingers, "June, July, August. Well, it's pretty quick work; but often enough it don't last no longer."

It never entered into the mind of Patience to leave word of her whereabouts. Of course he would know where to find her. Where should she go but to the old home; and to her own people?

As the shrewd parlourmaid had predicted so it came to pass.

Mr. Harper came back alone, paid them off, gave up the furnished cottage, and Kew knew the Harpers no more.

"Fairly riddled," said Richard Herringly to himself as he finally settled accounts with the house agent; "but one half the world lives by cheating the other half. But it's an ill-wind that blows no good. She'll find herself in the wrong box when her hot temper cools. I don't fancy I shall care to trouble about seeing any more of the Northumberland coast, and they'll have their work out on to find Roland Harper."

Quite himself again, he rushed back to Scarborough, and made himself so vastly agreeable that even his sulky aunt once more took him into favour; and Bella's prettiness bloomed afresh, like *Gloire de Dijon* roses at the second flowering.

As for Nelly Fargon, she was half wild with delight, and consulted Tommy in a sort of rapture.

Many turned to look at these happy lovers, and pointed out to each the successful cricketer who had scored a hundred off his own bat during the Scarborough "week" as they promanaded the Spa, talking away just as hard as they could talk.

"You must tell me all about it—just everything," said she. "It is but fair I should know. How glad I am to see that I took your advice, and said nothings; but it was dreadfully difficult; my tongue itched to round upon him, and tell him I know all about what was bothering him."

"I am jolly glad you didn't, Bee. What is it some old chap says about a still tongue makes a wise head?"

"It may," said Nellie, demurely; "I dare say whoever originated the saying was a dis-

regnable old person who had a great deal to hide."

An incoming yacht attracted their attention for some time, and then, after the crowd of watchers had dispersed, Miss Fargon announced the discovery that her pocket had been picked, at which she laughed inordinately, as at some huge joke.

"But, my dear young lady," said an old gentleman, his face all in a righteous glow of indignation, "it is a serious matter."

"It is," said Nelly, laughing again, "for the poor thief has taken all this trouble," holding up her out pocket, "to say nothing of the risk just to get a little bag-purse full of peppermints; it's just lovely. I felt a fumbling in my pocket, and nearly cracked with laughing lest I should spoil the joke. I hope, sir," looking straight at him, "you will enjoy those peppermints; they are the very best quality, as I bought them for a poor old woman who has spasms."

"By Jove, Bee! you did that well; he slunk off like an eel."

"And now, Tommy, tell me all about it," as they coolly walked away.

And Tommy duly related the well-worn story of how his friend had been in a den of a scorp with this handsome fisher maiden; but how a lucky freak on her part had freed him from it, for that she had broken with him of her own accord, and had gone away, he supposed, back to her own people.

"And there'll be no more bother?" asked she. "What if she should repent, though, Tommy, and come back again?"

Tommy grinned. "She can't very well," was his next remark; "he's an awfully cute chap; she don't even know his name. I'm dashed if I could carry out things so cleverly as he does."

"You are not wasted," said Nelly, with mock gravity; "not those sort of things."

CHAPTER X.

It was with strangely mixed feelings Patience Merrick found herself, nearing her old home. A wild tumultuous sorrow was pulling at her heart-strings, and a sort of stifled anger that was half shame and wholly repentance made her eyes blaze till the red discs round the pupils overcame the greyneess of their usual colour.

She had not calculated when leaving her home, her husband, and his protection upon this overwhelming feeling of loneliness that closed in upon her shrinking senses in thus revisiting the old accustomed scenes, as it were, a new personality. She was not Patience Merrick, the fisher maid, now; she was a wife, and a woman with enlarged ideas of things quite outside of and beyond the conception of those with whom she had used to live. Her very manners were different and her modes of thought; her clothing even would make her a lively topic of conversational interest to the simple, wondering, and yet stern judging fisher folk.

All this flooded her mind with inadequate pain. She knew their silent tongues well, and how nothing escaped their vigilant eyes and their sharp comments.

How would she bear it? She had always been sufficiently unpopular as living a bit above herself, "and there would be many glad enough to point the finger of scorn upon her in her lowered condition—for so she looked at it now—and could she but have stopped the train she would have retraced her steps."

During the first part of her hurried journey she had sat in a dazed, listless misery, absolutely thinking of nothing. It was not till familiar landmarks awoke her deadening faculties that she realised her true position.

But she was borne onward with marvellous speed, and the very glide of the wheels beneath on the ironway seemed to rive her aching brain.

Afterthoughts thrust themselves forward

for her discomfort at every point, until she was half mad, seared at what she had done.

Would Roland ever forgive her? Why had she been so hasty? How her action in thus leaving her husband and his home seemed to appear to her tormented mind as childish and unreasonable.

It was not customary among these honest folk for a wife to visit her maiden home for the first time without her husband. No greater sin could a man put upon his bride than allowing her to do this alone.

As we know, Patience had thought of this, and determined to wait; but in her anger and heat of resentment she had forgotten—that was it, she had forgotten.

Gibes and jeers—not very delicately veiled—would be upon every tongue that her fine gentleman had slighted her.

She saw now, but too late, that she had put herself into a thoroughly false position, and when this is the case, there is but one thing to do—brave it out with the best grace one may.

This, poor, proud, angry Patience determined must be her course, and she inwardly braced herself up to it as the train neared the small home station.

None should guess her pain. She would hold her head high and defy the worst they could say. Tom and Sue would be her friends; they would uphold her honour, ay, and her actions, at any cost.

Wistfully she gazed out at the well-remembered scenes, at the rocky headland, with its ruins and lighthouse, by the crowded burial ground, where her father now lay—for a Merrick had a right to be buried there with their kith-and-kin.

How often had she rambled amongst the crumbling gravestones, deciphering the well-nigh obliterated epitaphs? How often had she trilled on that high vantage ground at the sound of the mighty sea thundering in on the ancient rocks so far below? What a terrible requiem for the silent dead in this weird resting-place!

Near the Lady Chapel was the "Merrick's" corner. She could see it now, though her pained eyes rested on flying fields of rough stubble, for the harvest was gathered in. Soon it would be autumn, then winter on this high, open coast.

Suddenly she determined that before going to Tom and Sue she would visit that corner of crumbling old tombs and see her father's grave. She was impatient till the train stopped and she got out.

Without a thought for her own solitary box, which was hustled on to the gravel, direction uppermost, she set out for her destination, walking with swift vehemence, her veil down and her hands clasped under her rich mantle.

It was about four o'clock, and gun firing was over at the fort, and the first difficulty that presented itself was the non-admittance of strangers.

Again, unthinkingly, she raised her heavy veil and looked straight at the denier of her right of way, to whom she was as well known as his own bairns, and said,—

"I am Patience Merrick; let me in that I may see where he lies."

Then her voice quivered so that it was only by a grand effort at self-mastery she escaped a complete breakdown.

Patience, quite unconscious of all this, walked rapidly forward through the barracks yard, past the heavy guns, piles of ammunition, and no one especially noticed her.

It was "the season," and strangers with orders to see the fort were not uncommon; and then, too, it was the men's tea hour, so, save for a sentry here and there, at this hottest hour of the August day the burying ground round and about the mournful ruins was deserted.

With swift, undeviating footsteps she went to the well-known corner where the Merrick tombs were, and looked with dry eyes down upon her father's newly-made grave.

"Dear, kind Sue," she murmured, gratefully,

seeing fresh flowers made into a rough wreath beside a bundle of dried seaweed which Tom would have put.

"But, dear daddy," she whispered, "I was away, and I did not know."

How well she knew those cottage flowers. She could see Sue picking them. The red daisies were from roots she had herself planted and tended. The boy's love had been her father's especial pride, and the lavender he always gathered and dried himself. The spray of heliotrope—she called it "cherry pie"—was from her own window pot.

Yes, she could recall it all too distinctly, and she had left it for what? She heard a little whirr of sound close beside her, and looked round to see directly in her pathway a magpie. It was really a domestic pet, belonging to one of the soldier's wives, but to Patience Merrick it was an ill omen. She was not above the common superstition of her race, and gazed upon the creature with curious dread at her heart.

What was going to happen? "Churuk! churuk!" piped the bird, but being in no friendly mood, the excited woman turned her back upon it so suddenly that it flew skirling into the ruins.

This little incident disheartened Patience afresh, and her spirit sank dismally; but the fresh wind from off the sea, as in turning she directly faced it, revived her, and she choked down her uncomfortable sensations of coming evil.

The scene—she was sitting now upon the extreme edge of the rocky prominence—cheered her inexpressibly. She was singularly liable to outside impressions, and the sea, so far below her was sparkling and heaving with the incoming tide; the sun was shining gloriously, and busy Tyn was rife with steamer traffic. Big vessels were passing on the watery highway, and the fishing cobbles were flecking their brown sails and dipping their merry prows in the dancing waves, making her long to be once more with them, as she had so often been with Jem and Tom.

She was nothing at this instant but the hardily-reared fisher maid; her blood coursed through her veins, and her head, instead of aching, seemed clear and bright, so that she could look fearlessly out to the future with that warlike sense of struggle which had always been inherent within her, prompting her to shun the less romantic youth with whom she had been brought up.

"Why, Patience!"

"Oh! Sue, dear, how you startled me! I was coming along soon."

The two were looked in each others arms, and Sue hastened to explain that being at the station to see her mother off to Zazra, she had almost fell over Patience's box, and had rushed back home, but not finding her there had concluded she might be at the grave.

"And I'm glad you did, dearie. My! how nice you do look in your gran' mournin'." Not for worlds would Sue let Patience feel she was startled at her sadness; but afterwards she said to Tom, "I was almost stricken dumb with the sorrow in her face; tain't all for feyther, there's summat more."

She nearly bit her tongue off to keep back the inquiry which was, a few minutes later, asked shilly by Martha Trudgate, so cruel on hook, she issued from some of the soldiers' quarters, as she two were passing out.

"And wher's yer mon the noo?"

Up went the yellow head and clearly the grey eyes met those of the questioner.

"Not here," said Patience, calmly. "I chose to come by myself."

Martha Trudgate laughed. Already she had had a clack at the entrance gate with Jacob Muls, and had drawn her own conclusions.

CHAPTER XI.

RICHARD HERRING had not long left the house agent's office at Kew before a handsome sea-faring man entered it, and inquired of a

red-headed youth, perched on a stool, for the principal.

For this personage he had to wait some considerable time, for he had gone to the bank, and was having a gossip with the friendly manager about his late client, whose money he was paying in.

Jem Merrick soon grew weary of looking at the dingy walls covered with house advertisements and sundry fly-spotted photographs of some of the most desirable tenements.

He kicked his heels to some purpose, since his restlessness induced the fiery-headed youth to talk to him to wile away the time.

It was quite natural that during the absence of his superior he should put on aside and talk about the firm's business, which just now happened to be this very errand to the bank.

"What did you say that chap's name was?" asked Jem Merrick, cutting in across a valuable tide of gratuitous information.

"Why, Harper—Mr. Roland Harper, a commercial traveller, I guess, though nobody about here seems to know for certain what he was. Anyhow, he's paid us through the nose for a clear twelvemonth, and he and his girl," winking his eye impudently, "have only lived there three; this is the villa," tapping a small photograph with his pocket knife.

Jem's blood boiled, but he said nothing.

At this moment the house agent walked in.

Jem Merrick lost no time in intimating that his business was of a private nature, and Master Red-head was very quickly ordered off to get his tea.

"Well," said Mr. Winter, after some conversation, "this gets interesting. You say, sir, you tracked your man from Mr. Fargon's residence in Queen's Gate—I know it well—our firm had the letting of it—to Charing Cross, where you missed him; that afterwards you caught sight of him here from the river, and that Haines, the hotel-keeper, said I had let him a house; quite right; I did. But now comes the funny part; it is not commercial gents, as a rule, that visit at Mr. Fargon's, and you say he was in evening dress, which proves he must have been a visitor—most likely, a dinner guest. Now, I'll be perfectly frank with you, for I see you are an honest man, and in trouble of some sort. Excuse me, but I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you are not Mrs. Harper's brother, for you are as like as two peas in a pod."

Jem nodded.

"Just so; and that she is Mrs. Harper, or at any rate thinks she is, I have not the least doubt in the world, but—it isn't thought so here, you see, and folks fought shy of them. That's as may be; the world can but judge by appearances, and appearances, unfortunately, were dead against them."

Jem would have spoken, but Mr. Winter raised his hand.

"Stop, my man. I may assist you by telling you a very curious thing which I have heard within the last half-hour—very curious. Little Malkins, a high church curate here, told my friend, the bank manager, that to the best of his belief the man is living here under a feigned name, and that's possible, you see—indeed, more than probable under the circumstances—common enough—common enough—and it wouldn't do for me to ask questions except about money, d'y'see, if I wanted to let Westrop Villa, not," chuckling, "but what it always is let, and uncommonly well, too. He may then, I say, have married your sister under a feigned name. Do you follow me? But little Malkins—a terrible nincompoop he is, too—can't say more than he thinks—mind, he only thinks that he has met him somewhere under some other name, but as I know he used to go a good deal to Queen's Gate, with the intention, so 'tis said, of trying for Miss Fargon's money, why, 'logically,' he may have met him there. Oh, don't mind my trouble at all. I was once in the detective line, and rather enjoy this sort of thing. Well, to proceed. This buttons directly on to what you say about his—your man—coming out of Mr. Fargon's house with the man who was with him at the Fawcetts

—queer—you should have taken 'em there; but things of this sort always do crop up queer, and 'tis generally some small unlooked-for incident that turns the point towards discovery."

"And retribution," broke in Jem.

"Yes. Now listen. This other man, by your description, is a Mr. Godolphin, a rich, young swell, generally known as Tommy Godolphin. He's pretty well known on the turf, and especially well on all first-class cricket grounds. He's playing now at Scarborough—cricket week there, you know—but that's by the way; however," laughing a little, "there can't be two Tommy Godolphins."

"I recollect perfectly," said Jem Merrick, in a hard, set voice, "that the other called him Tommy whilst they were at the Fawcetts shooting."

"Exactly so. Well," warming to his subject and rubbing his plump hands together, "this Tommy Godolphin is engaged to Miss Nelly Fargon, a niece of our tenant. And now you know all I can tell you. I should say Tommy's your first quarry. I should look him up at Scarborough safe to find him; everybody knows Tommy Godolphin. I am very glad to hear your sister is with her friends, but I'm very much afraid, sir, ve—ry much afraid, that whoever Mr. Roland Harper is—and mind, I don't say that he isn't Roland Harper, for I don't set that," snapping a fat finger, "on little Malkin's suppositions, he's as blind as a bat to begin with, and sillier than any owl that was ever hatched—he has given her the alip."

Jem Merrick's brow darkened and his hand clenched threateningly.

"I am working this out alone," he said, gloomily, "and I shan't let on to Patience till I find my man. I thank you heartily for your help, and I'll act first of all on your suggestion, and I'll call and tell you what the upshot is and what the reckoning comes to."

"Do, do," said the astute house agent: "but a word—mind how you go to work; a high-spirited woman who casts in her lot with a man after, as you say, but a few days' acquaintance, may be 'little cattle to kye wi'.' She may run tricky, and not thank you for your interference."

"Not our Patience!"

"Well, well, this sort of thing wakes a demon in them sometimes, I only caution you. My word! I've seen so much of it, and it's astonishing how such women stick to the veriest scamps, upon my soul it is. I think your sister is, without exception, the most beautiful woman I ever saw—people raved about her—"

"An' she's as pure and as good as she's handsome," said Jem, proudly, "and I ain't going to have her looked down on by the Tynemouth and Collieries lot if I know it. She won't run foul o' me, whatever he may do. But there's one question I'll be glad to ask as you may know: my brother's wife says to me in her letter this morning that Patience has got her marriage lines; how'll that be, married in Scotland they was—if as how he has married her under a false name!"

"And she was under age, you say?"

"Yes," said Jem, hoarsely. He had worked himself up to a white heat of passion, and could hardly articulate distinctly.

Mr. Winter drummed on the leather-covered table, and outgelled his brain in vain.

"I don't know," he said at last, "how it would be. I know when I was in the force there was a lot of mystery as to Scotch marriages, and I'm jiggered if I can tell whether they're legal or not. It's a question for a lawyer, this is, and hang it, I ain't so sure but it puzzles them. I should go to—, if I were you; he can tell you if anybody can, and it'll be as well to know. He's a shark on this sort of business. In fact, give him the clue, and he'd ferret out the whole thing in twenty-four hours."

"Write me down the address, will you?" said Jem Merrick, "and I'll be much obliged;

but I'll do the ferretting myself, since I've got as far as this with it."

"I only wish," said Mr. Winter, quite truthfully, "that I could put you on his track, but the shifty beggar was too cute for that. He was disagreeable to me, but I made him shell out, and that's some compensation—a sort of compensation that lasts, eh! Well, good-bye, and you'll look me up again; that's a promise."

"Yes," said Jem, heartily; "and a Merrick never broke a promise yet."

"You're sure of your man when you see him?" asked Mr. Winter, still holding the strong hand of the other. "Not but what Tommy Godolphin will run straight."

"Ay," said Jem, his face darkening again; "I'm sure—when I see him."

"And I shouldn't care to be in his shoes when reckoning day with you comes."

"More won't he," said Jem Merrick, darkly.

CHAPTER XII.

On leaving Mr. Winter at Kew, he made his way direct to the lawyer whose address had been given him.

He was fortunate to find the great man in his private room at so late an hour; but unsophisticated Jem knew nothing of this special small mercy.

He did not stay long, and presently emerged upon the heated street, looking far more at ease than when he went in.

A slow smile crossed his resolute lips as he strode along Holborn way.

"Thank goodness!" he said aloud, although the meaning was lost on the hurrying crowd he was hustling his way through, "we ain't hard up, and money won't be wanting. And if he don't come to book with fair speakin', I guess he will to that chap's way o' puttin' it. I shouldn't exactly relish," ran his further meditations, "being turned inside out by him in a court of law; not, leastwise, if I'd any special dirty bundle I wanted to hide."

His cheeks glowed with inward excitement, and his fine eyes had those red disks round the pupils which so intensified the power of those of his sister Patience.

He was head and shoulders taller than most of the people he was cutting his way through, and seemed to look down upon them with a sort of amused pity.

Once he halted to help an old lady who was jammed in beside a wooden railing by some boarding, and kept there by a smart youth who did not see why he should move, and so lose his first chance of passing through the narrowly-erected way.

"Suppose, my pretty fellow," said Jem, laying his hand on his shoulder, and giving it a twist that resulted in a backward movement, "you take the outside of the railing. I don't think the cabs and omnibuses will take all the shine out of your rig. Allow me, madam," carefully piloting the ancient dame through the opening, whilst a good-humoured laugh greeted the discomfited dandy, who perforce betook himself sulkily in and out amidst the sea of road traffic.

Very early the next morning our amateur detective was on his way North.

The crowded train was an abomination to him, but he bore the infliction as well as he could, upheld by the fact that his quest was prospering, and that even this journey took him nearer home at every stage. Then he should have the sea at Scarborough, and no one but himself knew how he longed for it.

"I hope I'll have luck," he thought to himself, little knowing how chance was retained in his behalf.

He stretched his fine limbs in quite an alarming manner on getting his release at Scarborough Station.

"Here!" to the engine driver, "get a drink, and if you'll take my word for it you've got the best berth on this ship."

He put up at the Station Hotel, and with a

ough for the open sea which he couldn't spare time for just yet, he chartered a conveyance for the cricket ground.

As he jolted slowly along he felt suddenly less hopeful, and was impatient at the impeding, straggling crowd which got into their way.

"I ought to have walked," he remarked to his charioteer, "for I'm in a hurry."

His vehicle was a hard-seated "wag-nette," and the ready response,—

"Ay, and hurry waits at cricketing week. I guess you ain't a Scarborough chap," irritated him.

"No," shortly, "but I know the Scarborough motto—'I've given you the word first.' Drive on, or you'll get the blow second."

On descending from his purgatory he was just in time to render a service to two young ladies, who, with a choleric old gentleman, were coming out of the blocked-up entrance to the grounds.

Some one in the crowd had trodden on Mr. Fargon's bad corns, and he was fuming away at no end of a rate about sundry fools who had feet and didn't know how to use them better than treading down other people's.

One of the young ladies, to add to his fury, had hooked her parasol into an elderly country-woman's mantle, and altogether they were in a state of distressed muddle.

"Allow me, miss," said handsome Jem, towering in upon the scene, "to undo these lookings. Stand still, please, ma'am, or your gear is bound to come to smash!"

Self-interest prompting implicit obedience, presently our trio, Mr. Fargon, Bella Herringly, and Nelly, were free.

Nelly, whose sunshade had done all the mischief, looked with undisguised admiration at the handsome sailor, and said impulsively,—

"Really, how cleverly you did it! I am so much obliged. I only wish we could do you some good office in return."

Bella, not so glib-tongued, smiled as Jem replied, by no means abashed,—

"Perhaps you can, miss."

Mr. Fargon, still fussing about his corns and impatient for his lunch, stopped and said,—

"Eh? my man."

Whereupon Jem, smiling down into the dark, upturned face of Miss Fargon, went on,—

"I'm on a bit of a fool's errand looking about for a man as I don't quite feel sure I should know again if I saw him—not in this crowd; 'tis something like hunting for a needle in a bottle o' hay. His name's Mr. Godolphin, and folks say as everybody knows him, so you may, and tell me if he's here today?"

"Yes, he is playing," said Bella, politely, "and if you have once seen Mr. Godolphin you will be sure to know him."

"Yes," said Nelly, merrily, "everybody knows Tommy."

"That's the man," said Jem, eagerly, and Nelly thought she really had never seen any one so handsome as this sailor. His eyes were simply wonderful.

"Don't be in such a hurry, uncle," she said aside. "I want to hear more."

Mr. Fargon grunted but gave in, and the small procession moved on towards the hotel, after Jem had simply explained that what he wanted was a bit of writing to introduce him and gain Mr. Godolphin's attention.

"Yes; I can do that," said Mr. Fargon.

Jem Merriock stood aside, cap in hand, as the three preceded him into the hotel vestibule, where Mr. Fargon hailed a waiter for pen, ink, and paper.

"What do you want with him?" asked the old gentleman.

"Well, sir," said Jem, respectfully, but fully determined not to mince matters, but to do his business successfully at any cost. "I only want to get at some other fellow—I won't call such a rascall a man—through Mr. Godol-

phin. I just want him to put me upon Mr. Roland Harper's track!"

"But Tommy doesn't know a Mr. Roland Harper—" broke in Nelly, and then she stopped and grew pale about the lips, and Bella wondered if the heat and the noisy excitement of the cricket ground had upset her.

"He knows this fellow, miss," said Jem, sturdily, holding himself well in check lest his wrath should boil over.

He was shaken with suppressed excitement at finding himself unexpectedly so near his goal. It was well for Richard Herringly that at that moment he was bowling within the sports field, rather than in continually running against Jem Merriock.

"This is an unpleasant matter then, eh?" said Mr. Fargon, who was favourably impressed with the stranger's manner and appearance. And then he was uncommonly curious for certain small reasons known only to himself and his old friend—Bella's father.

Something struck him that this had to do with Dick Herringly, and but that Bella stood at his side he would have blurted out the query there and then. He didn't think, for these reasons aforesaid, that Sutherly had been far wrong about seeing Master Dick in Paris, whatever Miss Nell might say about his nastiness in general.

"It may be," said Jem, casting a hesitating look at Nelly, in whose eyes he saw a distinct warning, "or then, again, it may blow over peaceable, that is if he tacks. You are Mr. Fargon, sir?"

He drew his handkerchief across his brow. What did the girl mean by looking so piteously at him behind the other two? Her finger upon her lips, too? Well, she was Mrs. Tommy, as he suddenly remembered; for her sake he would say as little as he could.

Mr. Fargon nodded, and took his time about writing these few words, hoping in his mind that the girls would go in and leave him to hear something more from this stranger; but this was not Miss Nelly's intention. Unable to restrain himself, he asked,—

"And what's he been about—this Mr. Roland Harper. You ain't after a mare's nest, eh?"

Jem Merriock's sinewy hand clenched, and Nelly shivered. What should she do to stop his next words?

She glanced at Bella in an agony, but Bella stood placidly waiting, not one whit flurried or discomposed.

"Stupid!" was Nelly's frantic thought.

An overwhelming passion seized Jem Merriock, and now Nelly's warning eye was off him out came the trouble.

"He's only been marrying my sister, sir, and trickin' her out like a light o' love, and letting folks think so. But," once more wondering at Nelly's distress, "if he's grit he can tack!"

"Humph!" said Mr. Fargon, looking keenly up into the fair bronzed face. "If I'd your muscles lad he shouldn't come off with a whole bone in his skin."

Nelly tripped to the steps to look out into the glare of day on hearing a ringing shout from the cricket ground.

"Tommy's caught out!" she said, and added, as Jem Merriock was passing, "please wait out there!"

He just heard the low words and did not go many yards away.

Out came a waiter with another scrap of paper on which was written in pencil:—

"If your name's Merriock, wait by the drinking fountain till I come; I can help you."

Nelly did not find much difficulty in persuading Bella and her uncle that she was suddenly overtaken with headache, and easily induced them to let her go home alone to rest, whilst they stayed on the ground to tell Tommy that he was to be sure not to trouble about it.

As she walked to the drinking fountain she assured herself that the step she was taking was for the best, let what would happen. It would be perfectly horrid if this lusty, irate

sailor were to attack them upon the public cricket ground, and so create a scandal which would be very difficult to hush up. Tommy would quite see how her interposition saved trouble to all parties.

"And I'm so sorry for that poor fellow, too," was her last thought, as she espied him waiting for her. "Of course, he thinks that his sister is married; naturally, it will be awfully hard upon him. I shall just tell him all about Bell—pahaw!—how unsuspicious she is," with some petulance; "stupidly so. But what I am doing is just the very best I can do for her, poor dear, and for the other woman, too, come to that, for an open scandal can do no good to any one of them; but I do hate Dick; it's abominable, and were it not for Bella—"

What she would have done in that case will never be known, for she reached the drinking fountain and had to explain herself without more ado to Jem Merriock.

"We can't talk here," she said, with pretty impatience, "it's utterly impossible; we'll take this carriage and drive to the north beach—that is if you don't mind," she added, courteously; "we must be quiet somewhere, for I have such a lot to say. You are Mr. Merriock?"

Jem hastily assured her of this fact before he got into the landau at her sign.

"I am so glad," she said; "at least, I think I'm very sorry," blushing furiously; "I don't quite know," she wound up, piteously, "how I do feel; it's all so awfully horrid."

In a few minutes they got out by the deserted beach, and in this strange and bewildering manner did Jem Merriock once more view the open sea.

"Is the man to wait?" he asked in some perplexity, before paying the fare.

"Goodness sake, no!" and the carriage went slowly out of sight, its driver speculating on this little "go," before either of these two, so strangely brought together, spoke.

Miss Fargon looked wistfully out to sea, and then along the inland road, and finally up into Jem Merriock's face.

She was wishing very much that Tommy was here, and half regretting her of her undertaking.

"But I've begun it," heaving a great sigh, "and there is nothing to do but go on with it. I wish he'd speak first though."

But Jem stood respectfully waiting her pleasure.

"I really don't know at all whether I shall be doing the least good," she began, glancing shyly at him.

"I am quite sure, Miss Fargon," said he, firmly, "that you will not be doing any harm. You know Mr. Roland Harper?"

"No," said Nelly, "indeed I do not; but Tommy—Mr. Godolphin—told me about a friend of his being in Paris with a girl called Patience Merriock—"

"Stay!" said Jem Merriock, sternly; "there he told you wrong. If it's Mr. Roland Harper, he was there with his wife—my sister Patience!"

This was an aspect entirely new to poor Nelly Fargon, who now looked hopelessly into her companion's face. "Are you sure?" she said, hoarsely.

"Of course I am sure!" he said with court haste.

"Excuse me," Nelly faltered, devoutly, wishing that she had not acted so hastily. Jem Merriock read her thoughts, and his sternness died away.

"Don't be hurt, nor frightened, miss," he begged, for he was tender to women; "you meant so well, but I fire at a breath on Patience's good name. We ain't exactly common fisher folks. We're well descended from a race to be proud of. A Merriock has done nothing yet to shame it!"

"I can quite believe that," said Nelly, her courage returning with the scorn she felt against Dick Herringly, "and I will be perfectly fair to you, as I know my lover will be, although Richard Herringly is or has been"—proudly—his closest friend. But then," her sweet eyes swimming with tears, "Bella

Herringly, the young lady you saw with us, is my closest friend."

"And Mr. Roland Harper is Mr. Richard Herringly?" asked Jem Merrick.

"Yes—I think so."

"And what was Miss Bella Herringly to do with it, Miss Fargon? Is she his sister to be ashamed for his meanness to another woman?"

Nelly's eyes opened wide.

"She is his cousin, and has been engaged to him for years!" she said. "Now, do you not see how dreadful it all is? Poor dear thing, she suspects nothing. That's the worst of it."

Jem Merrick was staggered, and in his heart wished that he was talking to this young lady's lover rather than to herself. He could have spoken so much plainer as man to man.

"I do see," he said, slowly; "but Patience must be righted. As yet she suspects nothing, and need never know anything, you see, if he acts like a true man."

"Is that what you meant about tacking?"

"Yes," he smiled, "and it will be for him to explain why he chose to marry her as Mr. Roland Harper."

Nelly fell into deep thought. She wanted to put a question to this stranger, but scarcely knew how to word it in the face of his easily-aroused pride.

"You are thinking, Miss Fargon, is the marriage legal?"

Nelly started, but did not deny it was her thought.

"It is. I found that out before I ran him to earth. Miss Fargon, I have got Mr. Richard Herringly in a deep wick, and there's nothing for him to do but act like a true man. We have quite enough money for law expenses if he likes to push his infamy that far; but it's better, for the woman's sake, that she should never know just what he is. I've thought it all out, and I'm sensible enough to come to that conclusion, or else," flushing hotly, "there's nothing I should like better than to do as Mr. Fargon said, smash every bone in his skin. I loathe the thought of even seeing him again!"

"Have you seen him?" asked Nelly, quickly.

"Yes. I took him and Mr. Godolphin to the Farnes."

"How—very—strange!" she gasped, taken quite aback, "then you know Tommy?"

"I did not know, Miss Fargon, who he was, or what his name was till yesterday, by a queer chance, I heard it."

And then, as they walked slowly over the shingle, Jem told her all he possibly could of his side of the story.

"Now," she said, "put me into a carriage, and I will trust you to take no further steps, to do nothing till Mr. Godolphin calls upon you at the Station Hotel this evening; this I will arrange without fail."

CHAPTER XIII.

It cannot be said that Mr. Tommy Godolphin at all relished the position to which he found himself committed by his imperious little commander, but her argument that under the circumstances she could not have acted otherwise was unanswerable.

Before she saw her lover she graciously took her uncle and guardian into her confidence, and somewhat to her secret chagrin, found him not at all surprised at the outcome of events.

"The young fellow, and a handsome one he is, too, has been a match upon us, Bob; but Robert Herringly and I, to say nothing of that nasty old Saterly, he could not forbear this hit, 'we're close upon the scent.'"

"How silly of you all," said Nelly. "I declare I never knew old men were so deceitful; but there, of course all old men have been young ones."

Once more, in a long home record, Mr. Fargon retired worried, and continued his tale without dealing in any more hits.

"We had him at Kew," said he. "Mrs.

Roberts found that out, and knows the girl by sight. After all, she's a smartish woman; what we none of us had reckoned upon is the marriage. That's a regular facer, and I dare say it'll have that bearing on Mr. Dick—the scoundrel evidently meant mischief—but Merrick is right enough, the marriage is legal if she's got her lines. You see," glad for once to be explaining to Nelly that which she didn't know, "she only knew him as Harper, and he lived openly with her as her husband. How'll he wriggle out of it with her—and if she's anything of the same kind as her brother, he'll have his work out too to do it—I can't pretend to say."

"Uncle!" said Nelly, "you are chuckling really as if it was some rich joke. You forget poor dear Bella."

"No, I don't forget poor dear Bella. Poor dear Bella is uncommonly well rid of a bad bargain, let me tell you. And Master Dick, I take it, will be a great deal better looked after by the one he's got. Bella is a sensible girl, but she ain't sharp enough for such roguery as this. Richard was always a rogue, my girl. Since the age of ten he could cheat at cards, and took his own mother in the face as he took her sixpences."

The two old gentlemen, Mr. Robert Herringly and Mr. Fargon, chose to go to the Station Hotel that evening instead of Tommy Godolphin.

"If he's tricked an innocent girl," said the one to the other, "we'll pull him up to collar."

"And if we can't do it," said Mr. Fargon, as they trotted along, "we'll hand him over to this sea-faring chap, and he'll get some rough handling. There won't be much of him left."

Tommy Godolphin was told off by these same two to talk to and prepare his friend Richard for the evil hour that was so close upon him, whilst Nelly, to his intense dismay, was to do similar office for her friend Bella.

"I can't," she said on first hearing it; "no, indeed I can't do it."

"Well, my dear," said Mr. Robert Herringly, "then her mother must. And somehow, poor girl, I think she'd take it better from you; not but," sighing painfully, "my wife has been right all along. She never trusted Dick."

"Dear Mr. Herringly, don't take it so much to heart"—he was fairly crying—"it hurts me dreadfully. And what a horrid little wretch I am to say I won't do it. Of course I will."

After the two were gone Tommy and Nelly met in an alcove on the lodging-house stairs to compare notes as to their respective missions, and decidedly dismal notes they were.

"Oh Lord!" said he. "I wish he was anybody's friend but mine!"

"He will never be anybody's real friend," snapped Nelly. "He is downright horrid! and I only hope that fisher-girl wife will well sit upon him, and knock all that overbearing superciliousness out of him—I should!"

"It's a beastly nuisance—having friends!" murmured Tommy, disconsolately.

"Well, you need not wipe all the map off your best hat," said Nelly, sensibly; "and the sooner you go the better, I suppose, but you may kiss me first. And it's a precious good job, Tommy," quietly enduring a good many kisses instead of one, "that you are not supercilious or anything else that's nasty. And you know I have just as disagreeable an interview to get through, and I shan't go with my friend to the Farnes to shoot disgusting sea-birds that nobody can eat when they are shot, and so to say—now, you know you did, Tommy—wink at his wickedness."

Tommy winked at this thrust, but Nelly wisely let him bear the full brunt of the accusation, although she sent him off happy with fresh kisses upon his lips to help him over his bad time.

Bella Herringly bore the blow better even than might have been expected. Perhaps she was not altogether unprepared, but Nelly Fargon

was lost in astonishment to hear her wind up—although her face was deathly pale—with "I shall always stand by Dick. What he has done cannot be helped. And he must love her very much. If she will let me I shall be her warmest friend—you see, dear, I could not do this had he done her a wrong—"

"It is you he has wronged," cried Nelly, and then could have bitten her tongue out, when Bella, unable to bear more, laid her head upon the table, and wept so that Nelly thought herself a wretch for ever having dared to call her cold or stupid.

"After all," Richard Herringly congratulated himself when his friend left him, "things might well have been worse. I can brave it out and swear true love carried me away, as it has, too. According to Tommy, Patience is in happy ignorance, and so she will always remain so far as I am concerned. As for poor Bella, she will not much care either way. With that especial type of woman love's fever never burns. And, as a matter of fact, cousins ought not to marry; 'tain't quite the thing, and so I must tell the pater and mater. I fancy," lighting yet another cigarette as he thought it out on the hotel balcony, "they'll take to Patience, and they never quite liked Aunt Robert for a mother-in-law. By-the-by, I owe that old girl a grudge. She is especially well set to work, tracking me to Kew. I hope she enjoyed it."

In this humour Mr. Richard Herringly met Jem Merrick, he himself seeking the interview, and entering upon it with a cool effrontery that took the simple sailor a little off his bearings—it must be confessed.

He was, or professed to be, in a light-give, and take mood, and could not even begin serious talk till Jem was trying an exceptionally good oger. He made no secret of his marriage, but begged to disbelieve that any one had doubted it. Then who knew him as Roland Harper?

"The fact is, my dear fellow, I was hand-capped when I met your sister. I fell desperately in love with her on the instant. For me to experience that sensation is to—"

He puffed a light cloud in the air and smiled. "Well, as I say, I struck whilst the iron was hot, and chose to enjoy my term of dalliance without the possibility of even good-meaning interference of fussy friends and relations. I played a bold game and won. I had no wish for a fisher lass to marry me for what she might consider gain. She married me as I married her, for what I value more than anything else in the world—love. As to the small house at Kew, I confess I made a mistake there, so I ditched it up. Patience went off in a pet; she's lovely when she's sassy, but I considered, much as I miss her sweet company, that a little lesson would not be amiss. I must always be master of my own ship, you understand."

"Yes," said Jem Merrick, who keenly watched his adversary, but did not take much share of the talk, "I think I quite understand."

Richard smiled.

"Then you accept my terms?"

"On conditions—that always afterwards Patience and I are left to manage our own concerns, Jem."

The tone was light, but there was an undercurrent of hardness in it that boded ill for any woman whose spirit was not of a high order.

"After you have once been down, Mr. Herringly, with me and elated my sister Patience as your lawful wife in your own proper name and character, none of us shall trouble you more. I, for one shall not desire it."

"Exactly," said Jem Merrick.

So it was settled, and Richard Herringly was once more left alone.

"Hang the fellow!" was his first instinct, but as no one is all bad, a softer feeling grew upon him, and knowing full well that his game was up, he re-stuffed the cards and

determined to play a new hand for steady points.

He loved Patience—the time of separation from her had tried him more than he could bear—and it was only habit and custom that had prevented him throwing up everything for her sake days ago.

"After all," commencing with his usual formula, "a tame wife would have been the ruin of me," in which sentiment he was as near the truth as might be.

He sat down and wrote a characteristic letter to Bella, in answer to a small kindly note she had sent him, accepting very graciously her offers of friendships, and he never would have thought, when next he met her, what that letter of his cost her to read.

Then he penned a similar characteristic epistle to his parents, so that when he brought his wife to Dun Hall, as he informed them, they might be thoroughly prepared.

CHAPTER XIV., AND LAST.

AN unquerable restlessness seized upon poor, unhappy Patience after the first few days in her old home. She wondered how she had ever borne the life without the love that was now her constant misery. It hurt her that she had vexed her husband.

Why had she been so petulant? So she reasoned, this proud, high-spirited, and yet strangely humble fisher maiden.

Her position was so strikingly uncomfortable; a wife and not a wife, for she knew absolutely nothing of her husband's present whereabouts, and how anxiously she watched each day for the postman; how sick a feeling she turned away heart-worn and disappointed none but herself knew.

Could she but see him she would have wept and laughed, and given him a hundred welcomes, taking, as women do in such moments, all the blame upon herself. To be forgiven would be ecstasy.

All this she would think out one hour, roaming the small house in terrible suspense; the next, her mood would change, and she would ask herself why she should suffer such pain and humiliation? Why should she be treated after such a fashion?

Pride prevented her from starting off back again to her home, and when news came to Tom and Sue from Jem that she no longer had such home to go to, her distress was pitiable to see.

Sue was indignant, and yet unable to express her indignation, for in the face of the indomitable pride before her she could say nothing, for as well as pride was wounded love.

A word thrown at him would, in her present insecure humour, have driven Patience frantic, and Sue, with her loving, pitiful heart, was far too wise to risk it. In every variation of mood Sue let her be. It was little Sue's panacea for most ills, and a very good one it is, as a rule.

One day a very torment seized upon the stricken girl. It thundered, and Patience was always more or less moved in these storms. She was peculiarly under the influence of weather, and now the repeated claps, that shook the small town severely, hid her prostrate, so that Sue was at her wife's end.

There was a look in the lovely tired eyes that frightened her, and she wished that Tom was with them. Her unspoken thought was that sorrow was driving her sister-in-law mad.

But Patience was not mad, only, like a fine instrument out of tune, she was unstrung.

All at once, and as the sensible little woman knew most mercifully, Patience broke down into uncontrollable weeping. It was the first time she had utterly given way.

"Why does he not come?" she cried.

"Darlin', 'tis for you to wait," said Sue, stroking the masses of yellow hair that fell about the shoulders of the sufferer. "Women alms wait, ye ken."

"I cannot," moaned Patience. "You don't know, Sue, how hard 'tis."

"Darlin', you must; mebbe Jem ain't found him yet awhile, and mebbe he'll write to-day."

Sue spoke more hopefully than she felt. Jem's letter had been so vague. It was written just after he had seen Mr. Winter and before he had visited the great lawyer.

"De'e go out, dearie," urged Sue. "Now the storm's over 'tis just peaceful and grave; there's nought like the sea for soothin' trouble."

She had a double motive for persuading her charge to this, for always out of doors pride comes in, and Patience held her head as high as ever, and the restraint did her good.

She started up now and rushed to the window. The storm was over, and a vivid peace was upon the sea and inland beauty.

"Yes," she said, in a strange low tone, "I will go now."

"Where?" asked Sue, half frightened, "where to, darlin'?"

But Patience was gone upstairs; she sped two steps at a time, and tore off her rich mourning garments to don her old garb which she had worn more than ever when going out with the cobbles.

Sue was vaguely alarmed, for she could not accompany Patience after her express desire to be alone. But she was uncomfortable, and afterward, watching the swiftly moving figure from the window, she wondered had she done right in giving way. Suddenly shadows darkened her vision, and she looked up, crying out, "Oh, Jem!" She darted to the doorway, and losing all control over herself hung wildly upon his arm, scarcely noticing the other man who was with him till Jem said, "Sue, where's your manners? This is Patience's husband!"

"Thank Heaven!" said she, with tears springing into her pretty, startled eyes.

"Sir," she said, "I won't even ask you to come in; you must please follow her for me." See, pointing to the rapidly vanishing figure, "she's mad like to-day; the thunder hev upset her, and she's wild wi' heart-break."

Richard Herringly was strongly moved, for the sight of the place even had stirred his passionate love anew, and Sue's alarm was contagious. He remembered Patience had once said "she would never live to face dishonour." What may she not have heard?

He started in hot pursuit. Would he be in time to avert some rash act on her part? He almost ran, but the well-set, flying figure distanced him at every stroke of the trim feet so used to the swerving and which hindered him at every tread.

He saw she was making towards the rocky nook wherein they had sat the evening before she had gone away with him.

Ah! Heaven help him! Off that rock, but one mad plunge, and she was lost!

He called aloud—with hurried, frantic breath—no, 'twas not a call, for his tongue cloyed in horror to his parched mouth. A very extremity of fear was upon him. They two were in utter solitude in the waste glittering scene of wet sand and quivering sea, which the recent tempest had stirred into sullen ripples.

Suddenly the slight figure swerved, reeled, and fell prone upon the damp earth. With one vigorous effort he reached her, and raised the inexpressible lovely face upon his knee. Vainly he strove to recover animation, but Patience lay as one dead. He thought she was dead, and his remorse and agony were horrible to endure. He looked wildly this way and that—not a human soul in sight.

Richard Herringly will never forget that hour to his dying day.

There is not a more beautiful woman in London than Mrs. Richard Herringly, not, happily, one more idolised by her husband and his people. Her children are splendid specimens of youthful exuberance, for Patience is firm upon not permitting them to be weakened by town training and too much luxury. All they do tends to the robust order of enjoyment, and where the wife leads in this case the husband follows. She declares she has more trouble with grandma than with any one else, for

at Dun Hall the young tykes takes every advantage of gran's interference on their behalf.

Patience and Mrs. Tommy Godolphin are sworn friends, and compare endless nursery notes, while the respective husbands are each well content to be led—for their own good, as Mrs. Tommy says—by their respective better halves.

As for Mr. Fargon, he swears his soul is not his own when at Dun Hall with the tribe of young rascals. And he is not far wrong, for he is absolutely tyrannised over. But then he owns he has never been so happy.

Quite naturally—for he has a sweet young wife whose name is Bella, and a promising little son and heir of his own.

[THE END.]

MY COUSIN AND I.

—O—

I OPENED an old box of treasures to-day, the odds and ends of a life-time, and, carefully folded in silver paper, I found a photograph that called the tears into my eye—the photograph of Robert Sartoris, my first lover!

How I worshipped that bright, frank face years ago, when the brown hair curled over the broad, white forehead, and the big brown eyes, love-lighted, looked into my own.

It had been such a noble love in my eyes, for Robert's father was owner of the great factory where I was only one of hundreds of "hands" whose toil piled up wealth for him, and a hardly-earned living for ourselves.

There was violent opposition made when my lover announced in his home that he was engaged to one of the "girls" in the factory.

His father threatened to disinherit him, his mother sobbed and entreated, his sister turned up her nose, and hoped "he did not intend to introduce his vulgar wife into the family."

When all this was told to me, I refused to continue our engagement, and Robert moped and grew so pale and miserable, that his mother, who idolised him, consented to climb up four flights of stairs and call upon me in my sky parlour.

What a splendid woman she was! Dignified, yet so tender and gentle. My heart went out to her as soon as she looked at me from eyes as big and brown as my darling's own.

Before I quite realised how freely I was talking, she had won from me the story of my life, which was a very simple one.

I had had a home-ast friends, but had lost them all, and had come down to my present position through sheer necessity.

Before she left me Mrs. Sartoris kissed me kindly, and spoke words that nestled into my heart, and rested there for many long years.

After that Robert came again, and our engagement was recognised.

I should have loved him had he been the poorest "hand" in the factory, yet I cannot deny that when I came to my poor rooms evening after evening, weary with my heavy toil, to which I was not accustomed, I did think hopefully of that future that seemed so near, when I could preside over a pleasant home, need worry no more over "ways and means," and take happiness as my right.

I was spending all my leisure time and every spare shilling upon my simple wedding garments, when I received a letter from my cousin Marion, the only child of my father's brother.

Twice, three times I read it, and then sat staring at it in stupid amazement, trying to make in the calamity it told.

"Brockfield, June 20th, 18—.

"DEAR BESSIE,—
"Do you think if I come to A—that you can help me to find some work to do? Father is dead, and there is nothing for me. I was so ill for a week that I could not tell anybody what to do, and that is the reason no one sent for you. I am going to Mrs. Evans

to-night and then I shall come to you, hoping you can help me.

"MARION."

Marion! Homeless, orphaned, seeking work! And my uncle, who had sent me so many generous gifts, dead and ruined, and little Marion looking for work. I can say, truthfully, that no trouble of my own—and I had seen many heavy ones—ever seemed to me so crushing, so terrible as this that had fallen upon my cousin.

She gave me no address, but was coming to me. Never had my poor room looked so bare and homely as when I thought of the bright, beautiful cousin I had never seen in them, coming to live there.

The spur of hospitality roused me from my weeping reverie. At least I would make the place as pleasant as I could. I scrubbed and polished, washed everything that would wash, took an entire day from the factory without asking permission, and spent some of my carefully hoarded savings in eggs and milk to make a loaf of cake.

Late in the afternoon Marion came, with two huge trunks, which we were compelled to leave on the landing, outside the room doors.

Woe-begone, pale, and dressed in the deepest mourning, my poor little cousin was like a butterfly crushed by a heavy rain. She was such a child still, so utterly ignorant of all care and anxiety, so small and dainty, that my three years of seniority, my tall, strong frame, my knowledge of trouble, made me feel like an elderly woman, a motherly compassion filling my heart.

For several days Marion talked only of her father, her sorrow, and all she had lost. Mr. Sartoris gave me a fortnight's leave of absence from the factory to make my cousin feel at home, and I took her out every day, and tried in all ways to comfort her. She was grateful, loving, caressing, but miserable.

The weather was oppressively warm, and she had never been in the town in the summer.

She never complained. It was marvellous to see how she kept from murmuring, although her pale face, drooping figure, and mournful eyes were more eloquent than words. The simple meals—the best I could give her—were scarcely tasted, and I really feared, sometimes, that Marion would die.

Robert suggested that he should take her for a drive or walk every day, when the time came for me to return to my duties at the factory, and I eagerly accepted the offer.

He had taken a great interest in her from the first evening when he saw her. It was a very warm day, and Marion had taken off her heavy black dress, and put on a light one, that suited her fair, blonde beauty and little girlish figure.

Robert's eyes rested often upon her as she sat in a large chintz-covered chair that had been my father's, and in which her figure was almost lost.

She must have presented a strong contrast to my tall form, my dark hair and eyes, and my cheap cotton dress, made by my own fingers in simplest style.

After a few days, when they became better acquainted, Marion and Robert talked of many things quite strange to me.

They compared their tastes in music, literature, painting, while I sat by, busily stitching upon my modest "trousseau," well pleased to see something of the old brightness in my cousin's face, and grateful to Robert for each word that pleased her.

I could not make up my mind to ask for a place in the factory for Marion for I was sure she would break down; but Mrs. Sartoris gave me some embroidery for her to do, and she was as pleased as a child at the idea of actually earning some money.

Poor little Marion! How the work dragged in those wee hands. How often the soft, fair curls were pushed back from the hot forehead. How widely the rosebud mouth opened to yawn. It was worse when I was away all day.

Many times I found her dinner exactly as I

had left it; many times I found Marion curled up in my father's big chair asleep, with eyes red and swollen by weeping.

Robert took her out quite often. Sybil, his sister, who had entirely conquered her aversion to me, came and carried her away for a walk. Mrs. Sartoris was very kind to her. The great trunks were unpacked to show Sybil the pretty dresses and trinkets.

When did I first begin to feel lonely and neglected, to realise that in the family where it was my right to be like a daughter I was second in importance to my cousin?

When did my sore heart first feel that Robert's kiss upon my lips was cold, and his caresses no longer held me as if I was life's dearest treasure? Slowly, little by little, I learned my lesson.

The long, hot summer passed away, and I no longer sewed upon my wedding clothes for a marriage in October, knowing I would not need them—that honour alone kept Robert faithful to me.

One day when Marion, Sybil, and Robert had gone together for a drive, I left the factory early and went to see Mrs. Sartoris. She had been true to me, and I was sure she loved me; so it was to her I opened my heart.

"I am not jealous in any mean sense of the word," I told her, "but Robert's love is no longer mine, and I want you to tell him he is free."

"Free!" she said; and I started to hear her sweet, low voice so bitter—"free to wound and reject one of the purest, sweetest hearts in the world, and take a shallow, selfish girl for his wife! Do not defend her," she said, as I would have spoken. "I have watched her carefully. In her light way she is fond of you, but Robert can take her back into the life she has lost, and she has exerted every art to win him. The only comfort I can give you is, that though he is my son, and it pains me to say so, Robert has proved unworthy of you. A love so easily turned aside would never have filled your life as you deserve. Some day you will be glad you lost it."

How kind she was to me! In the bitter days that followed, when it was Marion's wedding that was talked of, when the treasures of clothing in the big trunks were renovated, "made over," "done up," repacked; when a combination of white silk and lace was decided upon for a wedding dress, and a fur-trimmed cloth cloak was brushed up to travel in; when the actual wedding was an accomplished fact, and the great trunks and Marion left my rooms for ever, Mrs. Sartoris stood by me, my friend in sympathy and affection, such as my own mother could scarcely have surpassed.

Looking at the photograph with eyes no longer blinded with love, I can see how weak the mouth is, how little strength or true manliness there is in the bright, handsome face; and I can see the reason why, when old Mr. Sartoris died, the wealth he had gained melted away under mismanagement; how much of the mother's fortune followed, trying to avert the inevitable ruin; how intemperance gained a hold upon the weak brain.

Sybil married a rich man, and Mrs. Sartoris has a home with her, but Robert and Marion, with their sickly neglected children, live in rooms scarcely better than mine in my factory days, almost supported by the charity of Sybil's husband.

And from the photograph I look up to a portrait over my mantel piece, seeing a strong, good face not handsome, but full of manly purpose, the face of a man honoured and respected by all who know him, who gives me the full treasure of love in his large, warm heart, and to whom I give such love as I did not even understand in those days when Mrs. Sartoris said to me: "Some day you will be glad you lost Robert's love."

We are not very rich, but my boys and girls have a pleasant home, my husband is prospering, and I am a grateful, happy woman, and can look back with intense thankfulness to the loss of my first lover.

A POET'S BARGAIN

—O—

ONE afternoon, a young man whose shoulders were crooked, and who limped as he walked, turned the key in the door of the attic room in which he lived, and went down the stairs, and out into the street.

He wore a shabby coat, a collar frayed at the edges, boots cracked at the toes, and a hat to match the rest of his costume. Could you have examined his pockets, you would have seen there nothing but an old silver watch, which he was on his way to pawn, as his only means of getting a supper. After that, he had serious thought of hanging or drowning, for his last story had come back from the publishers labelled "Declined with thanks," and the most amiable editor whom he had interviewed had informed him that "poetry was a drug in the market," and not worth making a book of. Now he was a poet or nothing, and that was not a pleasant thing to believe true.

As he limped along, painfully conscious of his shabbiness and of his deformity, feeling as though the little spark of genius he had once believed himself to possess had been blown out, some one who had followed him from his door suddenly touched him on the arm. He turned, and saw an old woman in cap and apron.

"Sir," she said, "you are the gentleman who always sits at work at something at the back attic window of No. —?"

"That is where I live; and as I live there alone, I suppose it is I," said the poet.

"Then, sir, will you be kind enough to follow me?" said the old woman.

"To follow you? Where to?" asked the poet.

"My young mistress, a very respectable young lady, wishes to see you," said the old woman. "She has something very particular to say to you."

"Is some one trying to play a trick on me?" asked the young man of himself.

A handsomer and vainer person would at once have jumped at the conclusion that an adventure of a romantic sort was open to him. Such an idea never entered Archibald Fairholme's mind.

"Whatever it may be, I'll risk it," he thought. "Perhaps it is some one who wants a poem written, or even a letter. At all events, I am too poor to be worth robbing."

"I'll go with you," said he, politely addressing the old woman.

Instantly she turned and began to walk rapidly toward the wide street which crossed the one in which he lived. From his windows he could see the backs of the houses, the movements of the figures who assembled in rooms on winter evenings, for people are not so particular about closing the shutters of the back rooms as they are those of the front.

Sometimes, in the summer days, he had watched a lady who sat at one of the upper windows and sewed or read. He thought her beautiful, but he never imagined that she so much as looked towards him. Women are not in the habit of wasting their glances on an out-at-elbows scribbler.

The old woman, ascending the steps of the very house of which he was just then thinking, unlocked the door with a latch-key, and ushered him into the dining-room, which was the handiwork room he had ever entered in his life. A young lady, handsomely dressed, sat there.

"This is my lady," said the old woman.

Archibald bowed.

"Be seated," said the lady.

He sat down. The old woman closed the door, dropped the portiere, and returning, took her place behind the lady's chair.

"Now, Dobson, tell this gentleman what I told you to tell him," said the lady.

"Sir," said the old woman, as though rehearsing a part which she had carefully studied, "my lady has often seen you at the

window of your room; she has watched your face, and believes you to be a man without vanity, and a gentle man. For reasons which you shall be told, she has inquired about you, and believes that you are very poor, and have no friends in London. Kindly tell me if this is true, and whether you are married, or engaged, or in love."

"I have no friends, hardly an acquaintance; I could not well be poorer. I am a gentleman by birth, and as I have no reason for vanity I presume you are also right in that respect," replied Archibald, flushing slightly; "and I am entirely free from all matrimonial engagements and heart troubles."

"Am I to go on, Miss?" asked the old woman.

"Yes, go on," said the lady.

"My mistress," said the old woman, "is a lady of undoubted social position, and immensely rich; you shall have proof of this from her lawyers. She has a proposition to make to you. Before she makes it she desires me to state to you that, personally, you are no more to her than any individual whom she never saw in her life. Having said this, the next thing I am to say is, that she desires you to go through the ceremony of marriage with her to-morrow morning."

"If you are willing to do this you shall have ten thousand pounds made over to you, and, before the world, may appear to have all the rights of a husband and the master of the house, with the proviso, that in private you are never any more to her than you are at this moment."

"You are never to take the slightest liberty with her that you would not dare to take with any lady to whom you had simply been introduced. No one will know this fact."

"You will live well, gain a good position, and be entirely your own master. Her reason for this is, that in her early youth, before she was sixteen, she solemnly promised a certain gentleman that if she was not married before she was twenty-five she would marry him. He holds her to her promise. She has grown to hate him. Only a husband can free her from the fate she dreads. She cannot marry one she does not love."

"But she proposes to marry me," replied the young man.

The remark was anticipated. The old woman replied,—

"Please to remember that you are to bind yourself to have none of a husband's privileges. He would have all."

The young man looked at the two women seriously for a few moments. His face was very handsome, though too thin. A peculiar expression passed over it that made it almost beautiful.

As he looked at the girl he said to himself that she was good and pure; that he could never hope to be loved, to be married, and that this beautiful creature, at least, would grow to be his friend. Why not accept the offer?

"Madame," he said, rising and addressing the lady, "I accept your offer. I thoroughly understand it. It is a business arrangement. I await your commands."

"I anticipated your conduct," the lady said, laying a paper on the table. "This is a special license."

Money was certainly no object in the matter, and Archibald felt as though he were in a dream.

At a sign from the lady the old woman gave him an envelope.

"It will be better to open it at home," she said. "Return at eight o'clock."

Archibald bowed and departed. In the envelope he found a sum of money, the address of a certain well-known legal firm, and the name of the lady whom he had promised to marry, and these words:

"When you come here come dressed for a quiet wedding."

He did not go to the lawyer's, but he obeyed the command.

Certainly he was greatly improved in ap-

pearance when he next stood before the door of the handsome house. The fashionable tailor had even ameliorated the defect in his shoulder. He looked a gentleman, and his well-dressed hair and well-trimmed moustache were becoming.

A few ladies and gentlemen were assembled. The old lawyer, taking the bride and the bridegroom into a small inner room, set before them papers which they signed. They made Archibald a rich man. Then an elderly clergyman married the pair, and the company kissed the bride and shook hands with the bridegroom.

They were well-bred people, and did not express the astonishment they felt at the sudden marriage of this young lady to a gentleman they had never seen before. An orphan, an heiress, and twenty-five years old, she was entirely her own mistress. And now began a most singular life for the young poet.

He lived in elegant style, in a suit of rooms entirely his own. Three times a day, at meals, in the presence of several servants, he met his beautiful wife.

When mutual invitations were received he was her escort. She was always courteous itself to him and he to her. Once at home again, they had no more to do with each other. They did not even converse. She had friends, went out by herself a great deal, and seemed very gay.

Generally guests were in the house at all times. He himself soon made friends. Suddenly transplanted from absolute poverty to luxury he lived in a sort of dream; and wrote a great deal.

He had been married in his real name. His wife addressed him as Fairholme when she addressed him at all.

Alas! though he had a crooked shoulder and limped in his walk, he was still a man—and a very romantic one.

He lived under the same roof with a beautiful girl! he sat opposite her at table; he offered her his arm on occasions; and slowly but surely that which might have been expected, happened—he fell in love with her. Happy was it for him that he wrote poetry; he put all his passion into that.

She knew nothing of his genius. She never asked how her husband occupied himself in his own apartments. And when she read the poems that often appeared in her favourite magazine under the signature of Nemo, she fancied their writer some tall, handsome hero of romance.

"Such beautiful poems," she used to say. And once she said it before their author.

"The verses that Nemo writes! Do you think them beautiful?" he asked, involuntarily.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "Do you not, also?"

"Not I," said he.

She turned from him with contempt in her glance; but he was not angry with her, for he had seen on the table a little book in which all his verses were carefully pasted, with admiring comments below.

After this he wrote his verses to her. He described her in them. Her violet eyes, her golden hair, her dimpled hands, even the pale blue dress she loved to wear; and she, brooding over them, lost her heart to them. Of all the men she knew, none touched her soul; but of this unknown man she dreamed constantly.

"What beautiful eyes your husband has!" said a girl friend one day. "I don't wonder you fell in love with them."

She only answered with a polite smile; but noticing them afterwards—for the first time—she thought to herself: "Nemo must have eyes like those."

A few days after this she found a parcel beside her plate at breakfast. A messenger had brought it. Opening it, she found the first volume of Nemo's poems within, and on the first page, "FROM THE AUTHOR."

"How did he ever hear of me? How did he know I loved to read what he wrote?" she cried.

She blushed, pored over the book with a happy, dreamy smile, and seemed loath to part with it for a moment.

"May I look at your present?" asked its giver.

"Certainly, Mr. Fairholme," she answered. He took the book.

"Candidly, what do you think of the man who wrote these verses?" he asked. "What sort of a person should you fancy him to be?"

Her answer was brief:

"Simply perfection."

"The sort of man a woman could love?" he asked.

It was their longest conversation since their marriage, but Nemo's poems made her forget her usual rule of silence in her husband's presence. The subject was too delightful.

"The woman he loves must worship him," she answered.

"I think you have not read this," he said, and turned to a certain page.

She took the book from him and read the lines he pointed out.

"He speaks of himself as deformed and lame," said Archibald, "and says in effect that women do not love crooked little fellows who limp, whatever their souls may be."

"Women love a man better for having suffered, if they love him at all," she said. "Poor fellow, he might know that."

Oh! such a look he gave her; but as she did not see it—she was thinking of her poet.

She was in love—with the part of him that he could put on paper. He adored her; but they were as far apart as ever in reality. Archibald felt that he could not bear it long. But he kept his promise; he was still politely distant. He never entered even his wife's drawing room without special invitation.

Delicate and nervous by nature, all this was too much for him. A slow fever began to work in his veins. At last it prostrated him. He lay at the point of death upon his pillow, and the doctor gently told the wife, at whose calmness he wondered, what he feared.

"He is always a sufferer," he said—"always must be. And this is worse for him than for other people. You must prepare yourself for the worst."

"Poor fellow!" sighed the girl, who had a gentle heart. "He never complains."

And then she bethought her of the sweet, good face, the eyes like those Nemo must have.

Perhaps, since he so spoke of himself, he might be like him; he might also "suffer always."

She took her place at her husband's bedside in a romantic dream, and did her meed of nursing—to keep up appearances, with her eyes generally fixed on Nemo's verses. And the patient grew worse day by day, though the hired nurses, who really did all the work, were skilful and careful.

At last the patient sank so rapidly that the doctor suggested that he should be told that any arrangements he desired to make before leaving this world should be made speedily; and the lawyer who had drawn up the papers which were signed upon their wedding-day was called in.

"In some danger?" repeated the sufferer, faintly. "Nay, I know that my days are numbered, and I have no wish to live. Restore to my wife the money I received with her hand; and when I am dead, give her a letter that is in my desk."

The brief will was soon drawn up; poor Archibald signed it with his feeble hand, and sank back upon the pillow.

As for the letter which he had intended should be given to his wife after his death, Fate willed that her eyes should light upon it, and woman's curiosity was too great to overcome.

Alone in her own room, she opened and read it. It was this,—

"MY DARLING WIFE, whom I love with my very soul,—When you read this I shall be no

more. I feel death creeping over me. I know I shall be free from all my misery very soon, for this heart of mine is broken. Before I lose the power, let me write down my secret. I am Nemo. Every verse in that volume is written to you, for whose love I die. Think of me sometimes, darling, and try to forget the crooked cripple you never cared for. I think you loved Nemo a little. Good-bye, dearest!"

The whole truth burst upon the romantic young creature. The tears rushed to her eyes and poured down her cheeks. Rushing to her husband's study, she gave one glance at his desk full of manuscript verses signed by that well-known name, and thence crept into the chamber where he lay flushed with fever, but still conscious of her entrance, for he looked at her and smiled faintly.

"Leave us alone," she said to the nurse; and then she knelt beside him, took his thin hand in hers, and showered kisses upon it.

"Archibald my love! my husband!" she whispered. "I have read your letter. Live to forgive me! How could I dream that you cared for me? You never told me so. How could I dream that you were Nemo? And yet, I might have known it by your eyes. Oh, my darling!"

Her arm was under his head now, and she was weeping like a child. Their tears mingled. All the long night she sat beside him, and at daybreak he slept upon her breast.

"He will live," said the doctor, as the poor girl turned her tear-swollen eyes upon him. "A miracle seems to have occurred."

It was Love who had wrought the miracle, and when Archibald returned to this world, it was to find it a new one—the world of which his poet's heart had dreamed, and never hoped to dwell in—for the handsomest man ever born was never so idolized as this little limping poet with the crooked shoulders, and the beautiful eyes, and the mouth that was made for kisses, though his verses were after all only great in his wife's estimation; and the best of him was the tender heart and the true soul, and the deep, true, unchangeable love that she had discovered at last, and thanked Heaven for all; and in that she was right, for the whole heart of a man is a thing a woman seldom has given to her.

FACETIÆ.

TANNING by electricity is being much talked of as an undoubted success. But for domestic uses the slipper is more convenient.

Is a bird in the hand worth two in the bush, how much would the stuffed birds be worth at a millinery shop?

When the daughters are infants, mothers are anxious to keep matches out of their reach. Quite the reverse takes place when they grow up, for then the puzzle is to find the matches.

"Wht, Abbie, how can you think of going to the mask-ball while you are still in mourning?" "Oh! that is all right. I go as a negress."

The bishop who has taken the ballet under his episcopal countenance and discountenance was asked if he considered dancing a sin. "Yes," was his reply, "if you dance badly."

"Ah! you flatter me," lied a dude to a pretty girl with whom he was conversing. "No, I don't," was the reply; "you couldn't be any flatter than what you are."

A young lady, following a Shakespearian play with the boob, remarked to her companion, "How imperfect these actors are! None of them say 'Exit' when they go off."

CLERGYMAN (to dressmaker): "Do you ever go to church?" "Yes, indeed, that's the best place in the world to keep up with the latest fashions. I don't know how I'd manage to get along if it wasn't for the church."

WHAT is higher when the head is off?—A pillow.

INVARIABLY A SCAPEGRACE.—A man late at dinner.

PRACTICE make perfect. True; but a man can contrive to drop a hot plate as readily the first time as the second.

A LITTLE girl in a primary school, being asked to tell the difference between the words, "feet" and "foot," replied, "One feet is a foot, but a whole lot of foots is a feet."

PICKED up by the sea-shore. "No. I don't like sea-bathing. It makes my hair so wet." "Why don't you leave it in the dressing-room?"

MASSACHUSETTS must be a highly religious state. "A prominent civil engineer" has been able to find only thirteen dams in the state which are liable to break loose.

WHEN a man thinks himself a genius, he lets his hair grow long; when a woman thinks she has a mission to fulfil in life, she cuts her hair short.

HE: "I wonder which of those two young ladies is his sister?" SHE: "Why, the brunette, of course. Didn't you notice that she had to put on her wrap herself?"

TOURIST (to native): "Is it against the law to fish in this stream?" Native: "Naw. It's agin common sense; there ain't even a stickleback in the whole river."

WIFE: "He is very sick, isn't he, doctor?" Doctor: "Yes, indeed." "Well, doctor, if there is anything very serious the matter with him, tell me all about it in such a way that I can't understand it."

"Blowson, your wife is like a Damascus blade. She is so keen," said Popinjay. "Thanks," said Blowson, "but I'm sorry to say she lacks one quality quite as essential to the Damascus blade." "Indeed! What is it?" "Good temper."

FOND HUSBAND: "Good-bye, love! In case I am really prevented from coming home to dinner I will send you a telegram." SHE: "You need not trouble to send it my love; I have already taken it out of your jacket pocket." He was home in good time.

PARSON: "I am astonished to hear a man with three married daughters say 'marriage is a failure.'" CITIZEN: "Well, sir, when you have three families besides your own to support, you will learn that marriage is positively bankrupt."

"CHARLIE stayed pretty late last night, didn't he, Lil?" asked sister Kate next morning. "Yes," said Lil, sleepily. "We were trying the pigs in clover puzzle till nearly eleven o'clock." "And did you get the pigs in the pen, Lil?" asked Kate, eagerly. "No, we didn't; but I got my finger in this solitaire diamond ring."

In another instance of conjugal amenities, a wife said to her husband, "I saw Mrs. Booker this morning, and she complained that on the occasion of her last visit you were so rude to her that she thought she must have offended you." "Nothing of the kind," he answered. "On the contrary, I like her very much; but it was rather dark at the time, and when I entered the room I thought it was you."

"JOHN," said a wife, who was supposed to be on her deathbed, "in case of my death I think a man of your temperament and domestic nature, aside from the good of the children, ought to marry again." "Do you think so, my dear?" "I certainly do; after a reasonable length of time." "Well, now, do you know, my dear, that relieves my mind of a great burden. The little widow Jenkins has acted rather demurely towards me ever since you were taken ill. She's not the woman that you are, of course, a strong-minded intelligent woman of character, but she is plump and pretty, and I am sure she would make me a very desirable wife." The next day Mrs. John was able to sit up, the following day she went down stairs, and on the third day she was planning a new dress.

DEPOSITOR: "Is the cashier about?" Bank President: "Yes, about half way to Canada."

WHEN a man starts out as a lecturer on phrenology he must expect to meet with a great many hard bumps.

COOK: "Now I'm a leavin' of yer, mum, I may as well tell yer as the way o' the kitchen door fits your store room!"

A YOUNG lady ate half a wedding cake, then tried to dream of her future husband. Now she says she would rather die than marry the man she saw in that dream.

BRIDE: "George, dear, when we reach town, let us try to avoid giving the impression that we are newly married." "All right, Maudie; you can carry this bag."

FIRST BALLET GIRL: "I believe my Johnny has become a Vegetarian." SECOND BALLET GIRL: "What makes you think so?" "He used to give me jewellery, but of late I don't get anything but flowers."

TIM: "If my employer does not retract what he said to me this morning, I shall leave his service." PHILIN: "Why, phwat did he say?" TIM: "Sare he told me I could look for another place!"

VETERINARY SURGEON: "What's the matter with you now, Patey? I told you to put the powder in a paper tube, put it in the horse's mouth and blow hard." PATEY: "I put the powder in the chube, sorr, an' put it in the horse's mouth; but, begorra the horse blew first!"

WHITE CHOKER GENTLEMAN (severely): "Do you know, sir, that this world will be a miserable place until all intoxicating beverages are done away with?" FLORID GENTLEMAN (cordially): "I know it, sir; and I'm doing my share in the good work. I do away with a large portion every day."

"How about this court?" said the last arrest to one of the bailiffs. "Got a good judge?" "First-rate." "Is he a non-committal man?" "Why, I guess so; why?" "Because I want to be tried by a non-committal judge this time. The last two committed me to jail for six months each."

THE bus was full inside, and the conductor said, "Will any gentleman ride outside to oblige a lady?" There was a deaf silence, until Tompkins said with a grin, "The lady can sit on my knee if she likes." The lady happened to be Mrs. Tompkins. She said coldly she wouldn't trouble him, but she sat upon him when she got home.

DAUGHTER: "When I marry, mamma, it will be for love—" MOTHER: "Do not talk like a simpleton, dear." DAUGHTER: "As I was about to observe when you interrupted me, when I marry it shall be for love of position, ease and display. Business before sentiment, mamma." MOTHER: "Spoken like a heroine! (Sotto voce) I must keep an eye on that girl or she'll run away with the first beggar that looks cross-eyed at her."

"MABEL," said the young man, bashfully, "do you know, I think your mother is a wonderfully fine woman?" "I am glad to know that she has won your esteem." "Do you think that I have succeeded in making a favourable impression on her?" "I don't know of any reason to believe the contrary. Why do you ask?" "I was only wondering." "Wondering what?" "Whether she could ever think enough of me to accept me for a son-in-law." And Mabel did her best to give him confidence.

PEDESTRIAN: "What's all that fuss about in that house—wedding?" Resident: "No. A new baby arrived last night, and all the women in the neighbourhood are going into ecstasies over it." "Who is that tall man all the women are crowding around?" "He is a minister, come to fix a date for the christening." "And who is the short man who attracts so much attention?" "He is the doctor." "Ah! I see. That no-account fellow, who is being pushed out of the way of row over, is the third man, I presume?" "No; he's the father."

SOCIETY.

THE QUEEN OF GREECE is a clever painter.

MRS. LANGTRY has so changed in appearance that she almost escaped recognition on her return from America.

At the age of sixty-seven, Rosalie Bonheur still continues to paint, and her skill is in no way diminished.

The Princess of Wales has a tiny pony which follows her all about the house at Sandringham, and sometimes sleeps in a corner of her bedroom.

One writer says of the present Shah's mother's appearance: "The palms of her hands and the tips of her fingers were dyed red with henna, and the edges of the inner part of the eyelids were coloured with antimony."

PEOPLE who have only seen the Duchess of Fife sitting in her carriage or moving about in the quiet demeanour required for State ceremonials can have no idea how great a pleasure she takes in violent exercise and rapid motion. The Duchess delights in gymnastics, and is an accomplished mistress in the art of fencé.

The Shah's present to the Duke and Duchess of Fife did not appear at the wedding exhibition of gifts because it is not yet complete. It consists of a very costly set of rare furs, which his Majesty has ordered to be specially made for the young Princess, and which are still in process of manufacture.

A new branch of industry has been opened by a charitable lady in London, who gives lessons in the art of doing up fine laces and muslins. Many of her pupils have been enabled to make a comfortable income by doing their work so well, as an experienced laundress is always in demand and can usually command good wages.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES, while being an excellent parent, is a somewhat severe one, and in the matter of education was very strict, and insisted, while her daughters were in the schoolroom on the greatest regularity in their work, and if an extra holiday was ever granted, it was only at the earnest request of the Prince of Wales. Princess Louise has a good deal of artistic knowledge and is fond of painting and drawing, and those who know her well and have seen her work, say that she has a good deal of talent and artistic appreciation.

THE DUKE OF FIFE is one of the few noblemen in the kingdom, or, at least, north of the border, who keep up the style of an old Highland chieftain. When he goes to Mar Lodge for the shooting he is received by a large number of killed retainers, who escort him to his home with some of the old patriarchal rites and ceremonies which used in days gone by to be in vogue among the clans, and, during dinner, the guests are always greeted with the strains of that instrument so dear to the Highland heart—the bagpipes. There was a more than usually brilliant display on the arrival of the Royal Duchess of Fife at her Highland home.

MRS. LANGTRY, "to whose complexion all concede the palm, takes a cold plunge every morning. After a thorough rubbing she wraps herself in blankets and rests twenty minutes, drinking her coffee or chocolate meanwhile." It seems to have been Mrs. Langtry who, first among the women of Christendom, took to wearing veil outlets for the complexion. "It is said Mrs. Langtry was heart-broken, "at the ravages our severe climate made upon her exquisite skin; and after hunting in vain for something to stay the progress of the fine lines she saw making their appearance, she accidentally heard of a remedy used by the Persian women to ward off wrinkles—namely, to cover the face with thin slices of raw veal. She immediately sent for the veal, and was "not at home" for the following two hours."

STATISTICS.

THE total quantity of coal now annually handled within the limits of the metropolis is upwards of 12,000,000 tons. Within the last 30 years the coal-consumption of London has more than doubled.

No less than three hundred fishermen lost their lives on the coast of England and Wales last year. The fisherman is so heavily clad that, once overboard, there is small hope for him. He usually sinks like a stone.

We English and Welsh are the most lawyer-loving people in the world. We have a lawyer or lawyer's assistant to about every 650 of us. The Americans manage to settle their differences without to every 950, the French with one to every 2,000, and the Belgians with one to every 2,700.

LONDON houses are either smaller now or more closely packed than they were ten years ago. Thus in 1878 fifty-five miles of streets were made and 17,127 houses built, as compared with the nineteen miles of streets and 12,426 houses finished last year. Altogether it seems that since 1848 London has received about half a million new houses.

GEMS.

OUR passions are like convulsion fits, which make us stronger for the time, but leave us weaker for ever after.

We never know the true value of friends. While they live we are too sensitive to their faults; when we have lost them we only see their virtues.

A NEAT bit of proverbial philosophy said to be of Japanese origin, is, "Be like the tree which covers with flowers the hand that shakes it."

NEVER tell people of several faults at once. You will profit them nothing, but discourage them greatly. Rather set their faults gradually before them, as you see that they have courage to bear the sight with advantage.

It is self-sacrifice which in countless ways oils the wheels of life, relieving distress, soothing sorrow, bringing joy into families, cementing friendship, endearing men to one another and lessening all the burdens of life.

A WARM day in December is a memory of October; a warm day in February is a dream of April. Their character is unmistakable; we cannot help going back in imagination with the one, and forward with the other.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

OUR cloths will last longer if one or two layers of wadded carpet lining are laid under them.

To preserve butter any length of time work out first the butter-milk; second, use rock salt; third, pack in air-tight cans or jars; fourth, keep in a cool place. With this treatment butter can be kept sweet several months.

TAKE some nice fresh shrimps and shell them, and then roll them in flour, and put them in a frying basket, and fry them in clean boiling fat until a nice golden colour and quite crisp. Then turn them into a cloth which has been sprinkled with salt and cayenne pepper, and toss them about and serve as hot as possible.

REMOVE the skin from a dozen good-sized tomatoes, cut them in quarters and take out the seeds; make a syrup with a half-pound of sugar to a half-pint of water, and boil till it pours thick; then put in the tomatoes, and bring them to the boil, but do not allow them to boil after; remove them to cold in the syrup and serve in a glass dish.

MISCELLANEOUS.

It would take fifty years to reach the planet Venus, travelling at the rate of sixty miles an hour.

If the wife of a Turkoman asks his permission to go out and he says "go" without adding "come back again," they are divorced.

SHORT SIGHTEDNESS descends from parent to child in diagonal succession—that is, some inherit it most frequently from their mothers, and daughters from their fathers.

THERE was a time in Merrie England when whale and green peas was considered a delicacy. History, it is said, repeats itself, and some of us, who now strut the stage of life may indulge in the same feast before we die.

IN RUSSIA, excessive corpulence is thought particularly charming, so that "when the common people see such a figure waddling along under the burden of her pampered fat, they exclaim in admiration, 'How thick and beautiful she is! God be with her.'"

ONE of the prettiest customs in Germany is that of giving flowers to those who are leaving or going upon a journey. This custom is universal. No woman is so old or so commonplace as not to have flowers given her, if she has a relative or a friend.

A "BEAG" was originally the golden chain worn round the neck of a civic magistrate, and this naturally attracted the attention of the public, who called the man first a "beag" and then a "beak." Gradually the word grew vulgar and got enrolled among the slang terms of the million.

A WELL MEANING clergyman has started a scheme for an organised body of Protestant friars, living and working on the principles of celibacy and poverty. When on their mission travels, they are to take neither purse nor scrip (though we hope a change of linen may be stuffed into a pocket) but depend for food and lodging on casual Christian friends. Their lives are to be devoted to the cause of converting the world.

THE title of "prince," with its correlative, "princess," is unknown in the United Kingdom as a title of the peerage. It is simply like "highness" and "royal highness," a courtesy designation. Until he is created a peer, by the title of duke or other rank in the peerage, a member of the reigning family—even the sovereign's own younger son—though styled "prince" and "royal highness," is in law but a commoner.

A PARIS jeweller, of the first rank, courts custom by showing intending buyers how the jewels they admire by daylight in his show rooms will look at night "in society;" with this object he has set apart a small room, which is canopy shaped, handsomely carpeted, lined with the richest velvet, and lighted by electricity—from a small plant close at hand—the lamps being so placed that the diamonds appear just as at night. Glasses are arranged to give a view of any part of the person—so that before purchasing a perfect idea can be obtained of the effect when worn on the proper occasion.

HIS Majesty, it is said, has commanded that in future her married daughters shall be officially described as follows:—Princess Christian to be known as "the Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein (Princess Helene of Great Britain and Ireland)"; Princess Louise as "the Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne (Princess Louise of Great Britain and Ireland)"; and Princess Beatrice as "the Princess Henry of Battenberg (Princess Beatrice of Great Britain and Ireland)." The "Great Britain and Ireland" thus added in this connection for the first time, will serve to distinguish one of these august ladies from her niece, who will be officially described as "the Princess Louise, Duchess of Fife (Princess Louise of Wales)."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. C. B.—We do not know the song.
JOEY.—Certainly not; it is illegal.
RUTH.—Declined with thanks.
FLORA.—A clergyman is addressed as the Rev. So-and-so.
HEARTACHE.—Find something to do, and do it with a will; it is the best cure for heartache of any kind.
FASHION.—Ladies wear their hair in whatever fashion pleases them best; short hair is still worn by some.
THEODORA.—An illegitimate child has no claim to any name but that of its mother.
GASPARD.—Almost any of the hair restorers will have the effect of restoring grey hair, but the use of them must be persevered in when once begun.
IGNORANCE.—1. You had better consult a dictionary. 2. We never give addresses in our correspondence columns; it is against the rules of the Reader.
MONA.—Chloroform taken for the purpose of an operation will have no effect on the growth of a young person.
PADDY.—Your best plan will be to get some good musical authority to hear you. If your voice is really good you will soon make your way.
DISGUSTED.—Bullock's blood is largely used in the refinement of white sugar. If you think it "nasty," as you say, don't use it.
A LOVER OF THE STAGE.—It takes years of hard work to make an actress like the lady you mention. Judging from your letter, you want education before you can attempt anything in the way of business.
ZAIDEE.—Rouge is better than anything for the purpose, but it must be carefully taken off with a little grease of some sort, or it will make the skin coarse and rough.
INCORRIGIBLE FLIRT.—1. There is no truth in the saying. 2. No lady would ever think of doing such a thing. 3. There are many English girls in service in Wales.
CHERRY RIPE.—The cost of a marriage at a Register Office is £2 10s. You can be married the day after you give notice if you can prove fifteen days residence in the district previously.
HASHPULCHERS.—1. Such familiarities are not improper between engaged persons. 2. There is no impropriety in sending a card to a gentleman friend, if it is a pretty and a suitable one; it is very bad taste to send anything personal or offensive.
ROMY.—It is a matter in which no outsider can interfere. You will be doing the young woman a great injustice if you marry her, liking someone else better; but judging from your letter you hardly appear to know your own mind.
FRITZ.—1. The machine you mention has been advertised in almost every paper daily and weekly. 2. The writing does you infinite credit if, as you say, you are self-taught. We cannot undertake to answer letters in any foreign language.
CONSTANT READER.—We prefer to leave questions like yours unanswered. You ask us to tell you what has puzzled far wiser heads than either yours or ours, and will continue to do so while the world shall last. We avoid all religious topics in the correspondence columns of the Reader.
AUGUSTA.—As we have often stated before in these columns, we give no information on the subject of poisons as applied to the toilet. The use of arsenic in any shape is dangerous in the extreme. If there are silly people who will persist in the use of such deleterious articles they must take the consequences.
LEILA.—The name of David's mother is not mentioned in the Bible, but her marriage with Nahash, King of the Ammonites, is spoken of, 2 Sam. xvii. 25. By some, Jesse, David's father, is supposed to be identical with this Nahash; others are of opinion that the woman married twice. The whole history is obscure.
WISACRE.—The sentiment and matter of your little poem are pretty and full of feeling, but the versification are hardly up to the mark. You will require to study the rules of composition a little before you can write poetry; the lines do not scan and the rhymes will hardly pass muster. But there is an old proverb that says "Rome was not built in a day." Remember that, and try again.
ONE IN PERPLEXITY.—No one can really advise you in such a matter; your best plan will be to wait a little; perhaps things will right themselves; it would be most unwise to marry for motives of prudence and convenience only, and trust to time to bring the love that ought to be there before you stand together at the altar. There are cases in which it has grown afterwards, but they are few and far between.
STRANGER.—There is no better way to get about London than to provide yourself with a good map, and study it. Make yourself acquainted with all the leading thoroughfares, and keep to them if possible if you attempt walking about much. Do not be deluded into making what you think short cuts unless you are sure of your ground; you will be apt to lose yourself if you do. London is not so difficult to get about in as it appears at first to a stranger. If your time is limited, as you seem to infer, do not lose it in aimless wandering, but make a plan and stick to it for each day's excursion.

MORRY.—There is no such thing; it is all imposture.
BELLA.—The writing is peculiar; the spelling and grammar are correct.
REBECCA.—Moles are natural marks and have no meaning.
ALICE.—A gentleman always keeps his promise; the conduct of the person you mention proves he has no right to the title.
FRECKLES.—Freckles are not considered beauty spots. Most girls of that age wear their hair in the fashion you mention.
ROSA ET ROSITA.—Two very pretty faces. We never say which we prefer; we might give terrible offence if we expressed our opinion about ladies' looks.
ULRICA.—We do not know of any special book on the subject. To learn it thoroughly you would have to be taught by a proficient hand.
ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—1. Constant brushing should remove the dandruff. Use a wire brush that will go well through the hair and reach the scalp. 2. The writing is very neat, and a fairly good hand.
TOFFEE.—All sweets get damp and soft if they are exposed to the air. If you had put your toffee in an airtight tin box directly it was cold, it would have remained crisp and brittle.
P. P.—We cannot tell you who was the first person to make a plum pudding in England. In olden times the special dish was plum porridge, which appears to have consisted of very much the same ingredients. What particular cook instituted the alteration and made the mixture solid is not known.

THE NOBLEST BUILDER.

The noblest builder! Who is he
 That bears this mark of high degree?
 Not he who rears with iron and stone
 The grandest temple ever known,
 And crowns it with a lofty spire
 That glitters in the sunset's fire.
 It is not he whose master hand
 Can make the senseless marble stand
 A bright creation, as if mind
 And will and power were there enshrined,
 While all the world in rapture gaze
 And peans sing of his mighty praise.
 Nor is it he, the hard sublime,
 Who deftly builds the lofty rhyme,
 Who holds the wand of rhythmic power
 And in some bright, propitious hour
 O'er all the wide world sends along
 The music of his matchless song.
 Think you 'tis he who with the sword
 To battle leads a conquering horde,
 And, o'er the bodies of the slain,
 With triumph flushed begins the reign
 Of kingly power, and plans alone
 The architecture of a throne?
 Ah, nay! 'Tis he who forms some plan
 To elevate his fellow-man,
 And by ennobling act and thought
 A blessing for the race has wrought.
 Him candid Truth shall ever call
 The noblest builder of them all.

C. D.

AWKWARDNESS.—Try not to be self-conscious and you will be less nervous. Don't imagine that everyone is looking at you; probably no one is thinking of doing any such thing. Simply be ladylike and quiet; take what you like, and refuse what you do not want; trained servants understand all about it, and you will not be made to feel awkward.
YOUNG WIFE.—There are so many stoves all advertised for the purpose that we cannot name any special one. The great thing to be observed in using paraffine on any oil stove is perfect cleanliness. If a drop of oil gets on any part of the stove which is heated it will smell. Properly attended to oil stoves are a great convenience and will cook everything that is wanted according to their size.
M. T. L.—1. Surely you must have misused a word in your question; no gentleman would do such a thing. 2. Yes, unless the party is very ceremonious. 3. Any dictionary will give you the meaning. 4. You must be guided by circumstances; it is not usual to make calls before lunch. 5. A lady always requests her guests to be seated. 6. No lady would do such a vulgar thing as wink.
A. D. P.—A dose of medicine will sometimes cure melancholy by removing the cause; it is often induced by a disordered stomach. Plenty to do, and a will to do it, is perhaps the best cure. Do not indulge in the habit of being moody and dull; find something to occupy your time, and think of and for others and not wholly of yourself, and you will get rid of your melancholy. It is by no means interesting in a young person, and is very often apt to be mistaken for sulks.
PENELOPE.—1. There is no danger in the use of sulphur, but there is no occasion to take anything in the way of medicine if you are in perfect health. Many people get into the habit of physicking themselves with the notion that they are purifying their blood. It is a pernicious habit and mischievous if attempted by any one ignorant of the uses and properties of drugs. 2. Milk is fattening in whatever form it is used. Olive oil is the purest and best for the hair; it can be scented to the fancy of the person using it.

UNHAPPY.—The gentleman is the proper person to ask; he doubtless knows what he meant; we do not.
PHYLLIS.—There are shops of the kind you want in plenty in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane Theatre.
J. C. S. F. S.—A married woman can make a will; she has any property of her own.
MOLLY DARLING.—Try sponging your dress with a little liquid ammonia.
JACOB.—The writing and composition are both good enough for a clerkship.
HIGHLAND LAD.—Sailors are generally credited with being very warm-hearted. A man's profession does not alter his character.
READY TO BE MARRIED.—The photograph is such a bad one that all expression is taken out of the lady's face.
GROWING OLD.—The gum arabic starch, described in the answer referred to, has been highly recommended for putting a gloss on linen.
BLUE-EYED DOLLY.—If your friends are in a position to give you a musical education apply to them; if not, have patience and do your best in the station in which you are placed.
CANADIAN GIRL.—We thank you for your letter and have taken the only means in our power of communicating with our correspondent. 2. The writing is rather careless.
FATHE AND HOPE.—Opinions would probably differ on the subject. Mr. Henry Irving is undoubtedly the most successful actor of the day; whether he is the greatest is a matter of opinion.
ANXIOUS MOTHER.—We never attempt to give medical advice. If your baby is really ill take it to a doctor at once; a small dose prescribed by him would doubtless be far more effectual than anything we can recommend.
MISTLETOE AND HOLLY.—The origin of the use of holly and mistletoe at Christmas is very obscure. It is said to date from the Druidical times, and to be a reminiscence of some of the mystic rites practised by that body.
NOBIL.—There is no such office in the Admiralty List; there are Lords Commissioners, Civil Lords, First and Permanent Secretaries. There are Junior Lords of the Treasury—perhaps that is what you mean—taking salaries of £1,000 each.
CURIOSITY.—Mr. Gladstone is not considered a wealthy man, though he has not applied for the pension he is entitled to after his long service. The amount of his income is his own business; if we knew it, we should hardly be justified in publishing it.
A FREQUENT CORRESPONDENT.—To answer your questions would take up nearly all the space we have to spare for our correspondence. We are glad to do anything in reason to oblige our friends, but your demands would tax even an editor's patience too far.
TOM TRUMB.—The line is not Milton's; if it occurs in his works it is borrowed, as many of his lines are. It was written nearly three hundred years before Milton's day by Chaucer. It occurs in "The Assembly of Foules," and exactly quoted, runs thus:—
 "Nature, the Vicar of the Almighty Lord."
BUTTERCUPS AND DAISIES.—Children thrive best in freedom and with plenty of room to move about. Do not wrap it up or confine its little limbs; let it roll and crawl about on the floor of a well-warmed room, and give it all the fresh air and sunshine that you can. Children are like flowers, and they do not do well when too much shut up.
ORANGE BLOSSOM.—The fees vary very much according to circumstances. If you cannot afford to have a really pretty wedding, the best way is to avoid all unnecessary expense and be married very quietly. The custom of the bride going to church in her travelling dress is growing, and seems a sensible way for persons who wish to avoid display.
DOT.—It rests entirely with yourself whether you grow better as you grow older; girls of sixteen who have been very pretty as children are apt to lose their good looks; you will probably alter again as you grow up. Beauty is not a necessity to anyone; people will think a great deal more of your pleasant qualities than of your appearance. There is a homely old proverb which says, "Handsome is that handsome does"; remember that when you are inclined to quarrel with your appearance, and shape your life accordingly.

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